Today's
The Herald-Palladium
included inside

Price sisters power Brandywine to 3rd straight regional title
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Dowagiac News

Established 1897 • Serving Dowagiac, Sister Lakes and Cassopolis **MARCH 14, 2026** leaderpub.com • A publication of The Herald-Palladium **$4**

Dowagiac approves grant application request for potential COA expansion

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — A vacant downtown building may soon receive a new lease on life.

The City of Dowagiac, in partnership with the Cass County Council on Aging, is submitting a request through Congressman Tim Walberg's Fiscal Year 2027 Community Project Funding process for $1.5 million in federal grant funding through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Fund Economic Development Initiatives account to assist with the potential acquisition and redevelopment of the former Harding's building into an expanded senior services center.

The Dowagiac City Council voted unanimously to approve the application during Monday's meeting.

The COA currently operates a senior services facility in Dowagiac that is operating beyond its intended capacity. The agency has seen a 70 percent increase in overall attendance since 2021, with lunch attendance doubling in that time. The 14,000 square-foot former Harding's facility would more than double the available program space and will include expanded congregate dining facilities, enhanced fitness and wellness areas designed for older adults, multipurpose programming space and designated office areas for visiting service providers.

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications
The COA is looking into the potential acquisition and redevelopment of the former Harding's building into an expanded senior services center.

"We have worked with [the COA] for years to find different spots," said City Manager Kevin Anderson. "Downtown is a central location that is close to health services and other things that seniors need."

The city believes that the redevelopment of the former Harding's property represents an opportunity to restore productive use to a prominent vacant commercial building in downtown Dowagiac and that the redevelopment will support ongoing efforts to strengthen the surrounding business district and downtown vitality.

"With the closing of Harding's, it has become part of their plan to perform due diligence to see if they could acquire the building and create a space of the appropriate size," Anderson said. "The location certainly has the size for them to expand their current operations and provides room for future expansions as well."

According to council documents, the COA is committing $2 million in locally-approved millage funds and launching a capital campaign to secure additional funding.

While submitting the application does not mean an agreement is in place between the City and the COA, the council taking action to apply for the grant on behalf of a potential COA expansion and improvement project is the city's show of support and a means of preserving a place in the grant review process.

"This does not commit the city to anything beyond making the application," Anderson said, "If it goes through, there are many more steps to take with both the COA and the grant agencies to ensure everything fits in place. This keeps the window of opportunity open, and with this approval, we can submit the application. We would not have had time to wait until the Council's next meeting to take this step."

See **COA**, page A6

Cassopolis Main Street announces slate of events for 2026

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

CASSOPOLIS — Cassopolis Main Street has announced its slate of events for 2026.

The Cassopolis Main Street Committee is set to host Beach Bash '26 throughout downtown Cassopolis Friday, June 5 and Saturday, June 6. From food trucks and a beer garden to live music and fireworks, the annual event serves as Casssopolis' summer celebration.

Cassopolis Main Street added two new re-occurring events to its slate this year in Lakeside Live and Beach Blankets & Blockbusters. Lakeside Live takes place every Thursday night from June 11 to Sept. 3 and will offer attendees free live music at Stone Lake Beach. Beach Blankets & Blockbusters will have families enjoy a free movie night every Friday night from June 12 to Sept. 4.

Rock the Block is Cassopolis' annual summer concert series and is set to return Saturday, July 18 and Saturday, Aug. 15. A beer garden and food trucks will be on site as attendees jam to bands Mr. Z and The Y-Naut Band.

The event season will conclude Saturday, Dec. 5 with the community's annual winter festival, Christmas in Cassopolis. The event will feature an appearance from Santa, Crafts, a jazz band performance, Christmas caroling, a scavenger hunt, a tree lighting and more.

For more information on the events and ways to get involved, visit cassopolismainstreet.com.

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications
The Cassopolis Main Street Committee is set to host Beach Bash '26 throughout downtown Cassopolis Friday, June 5 and Saturday, June 6.

File photo

'This is long overdue'

Dowagiac Union Schools to transition to Grade Level Center model

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — Dowagiac Union Schools officially announced Tuesday its transition to a Grade Level Center model beginning with the 2026-2027 school year.

Under the new structure, the district's four elementary buildings will be reorganized to serve specific grade bands rather than traditional K-5 populations. The district announced the specific roles for its elementary buildings and their respective leadership:

- Justus Gage Elementary will serve as the K–1st Grade Building under the leadership of Principal Alicia Stout.
- Kincheloe Elementary will serve as the 2nd–3rd Grade Building led by Principal Ryan Zietlow.
- Sister Lakes Elementary will become the 4th–5th Grade Building with Principal Bryan Henry.
- Patrick Hamilton Elementary will become the district's Early Childhood Center.

In its announcement, the district said the decision to move toward Grade Level Centers was driven by factors including enrollment, finances, equity, teacher collaboration and academic performance.

According to Superintendent Greg Blomgren, the four elementary schools were at 71 percent capacity last year. Blomgren said that the move to GLCs will bring the three buildings above 85 percent capacity and would help promote efficient use of resources.

"It's been over ten years since our elementary buildings in our district have been running at that capacity," Blomgren said. "This is long overdue, and it was just a matter of finding the right way to go about doing this. Academically, we are just not performing at the level that we would want or hope for our kids in the K-5 buildings. Creating grade-level centers is going to provide that opportunity for us to improve all of those things and get all of our kids and our staff in the right building."

By grouping students of the same age together, the district aims to establish more equitable classrooms across the K-12 spectrum to address class sizes, social dynamics and academic needs. The model also allows for the

See **MODEL**, page A3

Cassopolis grad to perform at Merriman's Playhouse on March 28

By PMG STAFF

SOUTH BEND — Jazz saxophonist and Cassopolis graduate Seth Kalina will present a live performance at Merriman's Playhouse in downtown South Bend on March 28, featuring vocalist Andrew Fisher. The concert will showcase music famously performed and composed by legendary saxophonist John Coltrane.

Kalina, a longtime presence in the South Bend jazz community, returns to Merriman's Playhouse after years of attending and performing at its weekly jazz jam sessions since the age of 15.

"This venue played a huge role in my development as a musician," Kalina said. "It's incredibly meaningful to bring my own project back to this stage."

The quintet is composed of five student musicians, ages 19 to 20, all enrolled in Michigan State University's prestigious jazz studies program led by award-winning bassist Rodney Whitaker. The ensemble will be joined by Andrew Fisher, a vocalist based in Southwest Michigan known for his annual Stevie Wonder tribute concerts and jazz performances throughout the region.

Seth Kalina is a jazz saxophonist currently studying at Michigan State University under Erena Terakubo, Randy Napoleon, and Rodney Whitaker, with prior mentorship from Walter Blanding and Leo Schlaifer. He has been performing professionally since the age of 14 and has collaborated with numerous local and regional artists.

Photo provided
Jazz saxophonist Seth Kalina will present a live performance at Merriman's Playhouse in downtown South Bend on March 28.

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FRANKLY

Tips and quips

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip or a quip? Call Frankly at 269-687-7700 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com.

■ Please keep the communities impacted by the severe weather in your thoughts and prayers.

■ Trump is the greatest President ever. He took on Iran to save our children and grandchildren from a nuclear catastrophe. Regarding the tariffs, countries have been ripping off America for years. Japan doesn't even sell US cars. Thank God we have Trump.

■ Congrats to Brandywine. Regional champions.

■ Many people support a new Meijer, but are opposed to destroying wildlife. There are plenty of blighted places that should be developed.

■ If Trump has nothing to hide, why are so many Epstein files not being released and so many being redacted?

■ So great to see our community step up to help those in need after the March 6 storm. Proud to be an Eddie.

■ We have no idea what's ahead with this "3 day" war. Iraq was a cake walk as to what is ahead for gas prices, the world economy and a spike in terrorism.

■ When's the last time Niles and Brandywine had boys and girls basketball teams win districts the same year? Congrats to players and coaches on both teams.

■ Why should I pay for local news? It should be free and no paywall.

■ 500 wins! Congratulations to Josh Hood for creating a tradition of excellence at Brandywine.

■ We can afford a war, but not a healthcare plan, college and trade school tuition or a plan to lower our utilities.

■ So to save wildlife, has anyone given any other suggestions of where to put Meijer? There should be something better than killing off more animals.

SMC's Brewer reflects on year as the interim president

By JOHN EBY
Southwestern Michigan College

BREWER

DOWAGIAC — Reflecting on his almost year at the helm of Southwestern Michigan College, Interim President Brent Brewer told the Board of Trustees March 11 that serving "has been one of the greatest honors of my professional life. It stretched me, challenged me and reminded me of why I chose to work in higher education – to make a difference in people's lives and to be part of something bigger than myself."

SMC's ninth president, Dr. Klint Pleasant, officially starts April 6.

"I stepped into this position with humility, a strong sense of responsibility and a deep commitment to this college," Brewer said. "I understood the moment we were in – a period of transition, with real challenges in front of us.

"We had two major projects in the works," he said. "We had HLC reaffirmation and organizational change and the weight of leading an institution that means so much to so many people. But I also knew that this was a college worth the effort and energy. Over the past year, together we have accomplished a tremendous amount of work that matters not just on paper, but in the lives of our students and the future of this institution.

"We successfully passed the accreditation reaffirmation process, which is no small feat," Brewer continued. "It speaks volumes about the quality, rigor and integrity of our academic enterprise. We maintained our AA stable credit rating, reinforcing our financial stewardship and our institutional credibility."

SMC was named Leader Publications' Best of the Best College in Southwest Michigan in 2025.

"It is a recognition that reflects the collective effort of our faculty, our staff and leadership to deliver excellence every day," Brewer said.

Brewer said the school has made major strides in growth and opportunities for students by launching women's wrestling alongside men's and women's track and field, expanding access and opening doors for more student-athletes.

"We broke ground and have since completed an 11,000-square-foot wrestling facility – a project that symbolizes both momentum and belief in where we are headed," he said. "We completed the 24 remaining of 36 beds for student housing, strengthening our residential experience and positioning us for continued enrollment growth.

Academically and organizationally, Brewer said SMC has taken "bold steps" in the right direction.

"We reorganized our academic division to better align our structure with student needs and institutional priorities," he said. "We launched phase one of the Lyons renovation project, investing in spaces that support learning, creativity and community. As of Friday, even in the midst of storms, we began shaping our 2026-29 strategic plan, ensuring that the future is not left to chance, but guided by vision."

Photo provided

Trustee Becky Moore awarded Building and Grounds Coordinator Andrea Swartz of Marcellus her 10-year service pin.

According to Brewer, SMC ranked in the top five in the state for growth for both Fall and Spring.

"That kind of sustained momentum doesn't happen just by luck," he said.

Board Chair Tom Jerdon communicated that "Brent has just been a real trouper."

"SMC has not lost any momentum because of Brent's willingness to step in at a time of an unanticipated vacancy with little notice," Jerdon said. "He and the leadership team function so well in part because we are a mission-driven campus that focuses on the students and the mission. I also want to thank (Executive Assistant to the President) Diana (Bosch) for her partnership, professionalism, organization, judgment, discretion and unwavering support.

"During this time of transition, I saw resilience and heart from our faculty and staff," he continued. "They stepped up, leaned in and cared deeply. This college is stronger because of it. The institution is on stronger footing, the trajectory is positive, the foundation has been reinforced and, most important, the mission remains clear and unwavering."

Trustee Becky Moore awarded Building and Grounds Coordinator Andrea Swartz of Marcellus her 10-year service pin.

Swartz, who began working for the college as a student in 2012, also worked in human resources while pursuing her bachelor's degree in human resource management through Ferris State University before joining the staff fulltime in 2016.

"Her institutional knowledge and positive attitude have made her an important resource for colleagues across the campus," Brewer said.

Swartz has been married for seven years and has a 13-month-old daughter.

Trustees accepted a $5,000 donation from Honor Credit Union, Berrien Springs, as Steve's Run's primary sponsor.

The board also acknowledged 16 gifts to the SMC Foundation totaling $34,651.

WEATHER

Tonight: Rain likely, possibly mixed with snow showers, mainly between 2a.m. and 3a.m.. Increasing clouds, with a low around 37. Breezy, with a south wind 5 to 10 mph becoming south 15 to 25 mph in the evening. Winds could gust as high as 40 mph. Chance of precipitation is 60 percent. Little or no snow accumulation expected.

Friday: A 30 percent chance of showers, mainly before 8a.m.. Partly sunny, with a high near 46. Windy, with a west wind around 30 mph, with gusts as high as 55 mph.

Friday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 29. Northwest wind 15 to 20 mph decreasing to 5 to 10 mph after midnight. Winds could gust as high as 40 mph.

Saturday: A slight chance of snow showers after 2p.m., mixing with rain after 5p.m.. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 42. North wind around 5 mph becoming south in the afternoon. Chance of precipitation is 20 percent.

Saturday Night: Rain likely, possibly mixed with snow showers, mainly after 2a.m.. Cloudy, with a low around 35. East wind 5 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph. Chance of precipitation is 70 percent. Little or no snow accumulation expected.

Sunday: Showers likely, then showers and possibly a thunderstorm after 2p.m.. High near 62. Chance of precipitation is 80 percent. New rainfall a.m.ounts between a tenth and quarter of an inch, except higher a.m.ounts possible in thunderstorms.

Sunday Night: Rain showers before 2a.m., then rain and snow showers. Some thunder is also possible. Low around 25. Breezy. Chance of precipitation is 100 percent.

Monday: Snow showers. High near 32. Breezy. Chance of precipitation is 90 percent.

Monday Night: Snow showers likely, mainly before 2a.m. Cloudy, with a low around 15. Breezy. Chance of precipitation is 60 percent.

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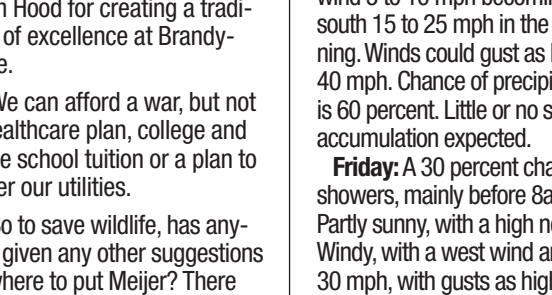

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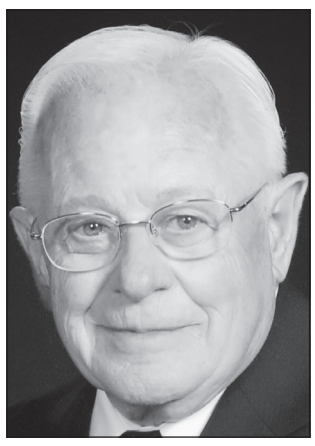
OBITUARIES

Floyd Jerdon Jr.

July 4, 1927 – March 7, 2026



Floyd "J.R." Jerdon, Jr. was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather family man and lifelong entrepreneur. J.R. passed away peacefully March 7, 2026, at Corewell Hanson Hospice Center at the age of 98. Floyd was born July 4, 1927, in Columbus, Neb., to the late Floyd (Sr.) and Lena (Rupp) Jerdon.

He married the late and cherished Donna Thomas March 30, 1950. During their 64 years of marriage, Donna was the epicenter of J.R.'s world, introducing him to new friends and experiences: from postcard conventions to vacations to nearly every U.S. state with their kids and grandkids to hot fudge sundaes at "Jonesie's" (Jones Home Made Ice Cream) in Baldwin, Mich.

He and Donna attended or hosted all the kids' and grandkids' events, birthdays, and holidays as family was everything to them. His loving family includes his children, Judy (Pete) Paruch of St. Joseph, Janet Jerdon of Dowagiac, and Tom (Jodi) Jerdon of Dowagiac, five grandchildren: Tamara (Jerry) Rodman, Ryan (Marisa) Paruch, and Jason Paruch, Ella and Anna Jerdon, and great-grandchildren Will and Nora Paruch.

J.R., his parents and German shepherd Rover moved to Dowagiac in 1940. The lakes, streams and green fields of Silver Creek Township were a far cry from the grinding poverty of his western upbringing in rural Lindsay, Neb., during both the Great Depression and Dust Bowl, where J.R. rode his pony, Silver, four miles to school each way and lived without electricity, running water and sometimes, heat. He survived a severe childhood farming accident with little medical attention.

Those early hardships – plus a natural entrepreneurial spark – taught J.R. that perseverance and determination could conquer anything. J.R. launched his first business as a young teen, running a thriving fishing worm venture at Indian Lake.

As a young adult, he worked tirelessly as both a full-time farmer and house painter. J.R.'s natural business savvy led him to earn his real estate license and found Jerdon Real Estate in 1950, working with his father to build a company whose iconic yellow and navy signs dotted lakes, homes, and farms, across Southwest Michigan. A true patriot, J.R. enlisted as a tank commander in the 46th Division of the Michigan National Guard proudly serving for six years.

Every year, J.R. celebrated both his own birthday and that of the country he loved with a spectacular fireworks display "Up North" at the family cottage on Wolf Lake. A highlight of his grandkids' summers was "Bah Bah's" startlingly fast sprint down the pier away from a lit fuse. Despite his self-made success, J.R. cherished the simple things: mushroom and deer hunting, camping in a large canvas tent with fellow hunters, grilling steaks, sipping bourbon, playing cards, traveling with friends, spending family time at the lake and enjoying his favorite Hershey's Milk Chocolate bars and Hostess Ding Dongs.

He was a prolific storyteller of his life experiences as his life was rugged, active, and compelling. J.R. served on the county soil conservation district, township planning commission and was a building inspector and a licensed real estate appraiser. Well into his 90s, Floyd still worked full time at the family firm totaling a 76-year run, read several newspapers daily and managed multiple properties and investments, his abilities and work ethic belying his age.

The family is eternally grateful to J.R. 's neighbors, Pattie Behnke and the late Sue Barnes, who delivered him home-cooked meals for a dozen years, as well as the exceptionally caring staff at both Corewell Hospital in St. Joseph and the Hanson Hospice Center.

Graveside services with military honors will be held at 1:00 PM on Saturday, March 21, 2026, at Riverside Cemetery, 400 Riverside Dr, Dowagiac. A Memorial Gathering will follow the burial from 3:00-6:00 PM at Clark Chapel – Starks Family Funeral Homes, 405 Center St, Dowagiac. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in J.R. 's name may be directed to the benefit of Corewell Health Merlin & Carolyn Hanson Hospice Center, 4382 Cleveland Ave., Stevensville, MI 49127.

Please share a memory of J.R. or leave condolences to his family at www.clarkch.com.

Eunice E. Bell

July 11, 1945 – March 3, 2026

Eunice E. Bell, 80 of Dowagiac, passed away Tuesday, March 3, 2026, likely with a to-do list still in mind. She was born in Vandalia, on July 11, 1945 to Glenn and Ada (Smeltzer) Hartzell. She grew up in Jones, alongside her older brother Louie, developing the determination and independence that would define her life.

Eunice graduated from Marcellus High School in 1963 and later married Richard Bell on New Year's Eve 1980. They shared nearly three decades together until his passing in 2010. Eunice worked for many years at Ausra Equipment Co. and Creative Foam, but retirement didn't slow her down one bit. A proud member of the Dowagiac Moose Lodge 933, she was always on the move – visiting friends and family. Eunice enjoyed taking motorcycle rides and spending time with her close friend, John Boyce. She also enjoyed shopping, traveling the area, listening to local bands and working in her yard.

She firmly believed that if something needed done, she could do it herself – including shoveling snow and climbing onto the roof to clear leaves (whether anyone approved or not). She never met a stranger, thanks to her legendary gift of gab. A quick trip to the store could easily turn into a two-hour social event. Her laughter, stories, and strong opinions will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.

Eunice leaves behind her children, Denise (Dennis) Juday, Daryl Keesler (Julie Tavrides), Jason (Kerri) Bell, and Robert Bell (Tosha Atiah); Grandchildren, Jeremy (Hannah) Juday, Jordan (Allison) Juday, and Madalyn Bell (Miles Barilla); and her great-granddaughter Luella Juday, along with many dear friends.

The family would like you to join them for a Celebration of Eunice's life and dinner on Friday, March 13, 2026 from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. in the Dowagiac Moose, 54867 M-51, Dowagiac. Eunice will be laid to rest in Plum Grove Cemetery in Union, next to her husband and her parents. Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis.

Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Stephen Parsons

September 16, 1948 – March 5, 2026

Stephen Parsons, 77, of Cassopolis Michigan, died peacefully Thursday March 5, 2026 in the comfort of his family's presence. His life began September 16, 1948 in Dowagiac Michigan the eldest son of seventeen children born to Loyd Parsons and Aleyne (Doris) Gleason. He married Janet Wantowski on October 29, 1983 in Petoskey Michigan.

Steve served proudly in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam war. Steve was a hard worker and loved being outdoors and doing various activities such as cutting wood (anything involving his sawmill), hunting, and fishing. He had a love for local history and collecting vintage local milk bottles. You could find Steve at the local McDonald's getting his daily cup of coffee or spending time with one of his many siblings.

Steve will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by daughter, Stacey Parsons (Jonathan Fairley) of Mishawaka, Robert Wantowski (Jessica Wolski) of Vandalia; Grandchildren, Paige (Stephen) Smoody of Marcellus, Olivia Wantowski of Cassopolis, Lucas Wantowski of Lawton, Blake Wantowski of Marcellus; great grandson, Easton Smoody; Sisters, Linda (Charles) Francis, Cheryl Parsons, Beverly (Tom) Harris, Cathy Eberhardt, Mary (Jeff) Snyder, Elizabeth (Steve) Lee, Pam (James) Young; Brothers, Mark (Betsy) Parsons, Matthew Parsons, Doug (Amy) Parsons, Dan Parsons, Mike Parsons, Pat Parsons and a host of nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 32 years Janet Parsons. His sisters, Phyllis Garber, Susan Hutchings, and Martha Rice.

The family will have a private gathering at-a-later-date and time to remember the life of Steve. Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Roger Mann

March 29, 1960 – March 5, 2026

Roger Mann, 65 of Niles, died peacefully March 5, 2026, in the comfort of his family's presence. His life began March 29, 1960 in Elkhart Indiana, the third of 3 children born to Austin and Helen Mann. He married Kris Mann September 1, 1988 in Cassopolis, Michigan. She survives.

Roger loved to watch NASCAR and football. Most of all, he loved spending time with his great-grandkids and telling the best dad jokes. Roger will be greatly missed by family and friends. Roger is survived by spouse, Kris (Darrigan) Mann of Niles; three daughters, Michelle, Jamie, and Toni; seven grandchildren, Brennon, Kelsey, Matt, Warner, Courtney Terry, Lester; six great- grand- children, Amara, Liala, Mikey, Luke, Maya, Carter, and a host of nieces and nephews. Roger was preceded in death by his parents and his brother Ed Mann.

Family and friends will gather at a later date for a celebration of life. The family prefers contributions in memory of Roger be made to Wagner Family Funerals 202 North Broadway, Cassopolis Michigan, 49031, to cover funeral expenses. Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

Death notices

Jeanetta Diane Isek, 78, passed away on Friday, February 27, 2026, in South Bend, Indiana. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Maureen Ann (Peterson) Paulin, passed away on March 6, 2026, at the age of 74, in Eau Claire, Michigan. Services will be held on Thursday March 12, 2026 at Bowerman Funeral Home in Eau Claire. Arrangements have been entrusted to Bowerman Funeral Home & Cremation Services of Eau Claire, Michigan. www.BowermanFuneral.com.

Jo Ann Fleenor, 76, passed away on Saturday, March 7, 2026, in Stevensville, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Obituary policy

Leader Publications publishes death notices at a cost of $15. Extended obituaries are priced based on character count.

If there's an error because of a mistake made by the newspaper, the obituary will be reprinted at no charge.

For more information, or to submit an obituary, email obits@leaderpub.com.

12-year-old boy killed in Cass County tornado identified

By PMG STAFF

CASS COUNTY — A 12-year-old boy was killed during severe weather Friday in Cass County, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

At approximately 3:12 p.m. Friday, the CCSO received information indicating that a possible tornado touched down in the 68000 block of Conrad Road north of U.S. 12. The caller advised that they could not find their son. Upon arrival of first responders, it was determined that he had been located and his parents were providing first aid.

12-year-old Silas Anderson was taken to South Bend Memorial Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries. Silas was surrounded by family at the time of his passing.

Sheriff Roach asks that readers respect the family's privacy as they try to comprehend and deal with this tragedy. Heraldpalladium.com/leaderpub will be updated as more information becomes available.

Photo provided / Cass County

Cass County emergency personnel are working to clear debris and provide support to those affected by a tornado that touched down near Edwardsburg Friday, March 6.

MODEL

From page A1

development of targeted curriculum and programming tailored to individual grade levels.

"We will see an increase in our student performance data. Blomgren said. "It's not going to happen overnight, but over the next few years, we'll notice a swing because we're going to provide a better learning environment for our kids. We want to have all of the same-grade students in the same building so that teachers can focus on those two grades within each of those buildings. We are excited about the path we're headed."

The move aims to give staff increased collaborative time, including a new weekly late start to facilitate planning, as well as professional development opportunities to help them become experts in their specific grade levels. For students, the model creates consistent behavioral expectations and focuses on age-appropriate environments.

The district also plans to implement weekly enrichment and intervention opportunities to make sure that all students receive the support they need as they prepare for the eventual shift to middle school.

The need for an early childhood center

During the early stages of planning, the district considered closing one of the district's four elementary school buildings with the other three being reconfigured into grade level centers. According to Blomgren, the cost to keep an elementary school building is approximately $2.5 million per year. Those discussions evolved into turning Patrick Hamilton into an early childhood center. Blomgren said that the building was chosen due to its central location within the district.

"As we looked at the financial stability and enrollment, closing one elementary building for an annual savings of around $2.5 million was definitely on the table," Blomgren said. "Closing Sister Lakes is the easy way out because it's on the outskirts of the district with the lowest attendance, but the board and I felt there were other needs in our school community that needed to be addressed. We decided to re-envision what that fourth elementary building could be used for."

Blomgren said the early childhood center will serve the district's partnership with the Heritage Southwest ISD to run pre-kindergarten programming, five sections of GSRP and one section of Strong Beginnings for three-year-olds. The district is also working toward partnerships to have a daycare facility operational in that building as well.

"We want to have the option of supervision for before- and after-school times," Blomgren said. "Parents could drop off kids before they catch the bus to their grade-level center, and we would provide supervision and activities while parents report to work."

According to Blomgren, the early childhood center has been well-received by both local state licensing agencies as well as parents.

"They know that there is a need for a daycare service here not only in Dowagiac but in Cass County," Blomgren said. "We realized that need was there after a local daycare facility, St. John's, closed its doors. We don't know how big of a role we can play at this point with regards to that. But we want to at least have that option available for our school community and to see where that can build and take us with regards to having that fourth building serve as a place for an early childhood center that would manage our pre-k programming and then also provide some services for our school community for those parents and families that need that assistance during the day.

"I think that that idea and concept has been well received but there's a lot of work yet left to be done in order to get that facility up and running and where we need it to be by the time school starts in August. Our goal is at a minimum that we will have that available to our school families."

Addressing transportation

One of the most challenging pieces the district has had during the process has been transportation. Blomgren said the district has consulted with a transportation team through a grant from the State of Michigan to help reconfigure and restructure busing routes to ensure busing is an option for every student in the district.

"We will be moving kids around the district from their local home schools. A fourth or fifth grader who has to walk two blocks to school may now be going out to Sister Lakes to attend our grade-level center there," he said. "Likewise, kiddos in Sister Lakes that were attending as kindergarten through third graders may be coming into town to attend our K-1 building at Justus Gage or Kincheloe for second and third grade. We will continue to share the message that transportation will be available. It may look a little different; they may still go to the school they used to attend as a central hub and catch a bus from that location to their new grade-level center. We've been working on this for about a year and a half with the consulting team to alleviate this anxiety for parents."

While having siblings go from being in the same building to different buildings may take getting used to for families, Blomgren said the transition just accelerates what families experience when their children reach middle or high school.

"A family that may have had a first grader and a fourth grader in the same building may now be in different buildings. This is not uncommon for us as parents once kids reach the middle school level," Blomgren said. "I've experienced having a fifth grader, a seventh grader and a ninth grader across three buildings myself. We're just moving that transition forward with the idea that these centers will benefit long-term learning opportunities."

Transition timetable

In the weeks and months to come, the district will be preparing for the transition to GLCs. Blomgren said that the district aims to announce staff assignments and placements by the end of March.

"We're working through that in collaboration with our staff through surveys to build effective teams and place everyone where they feel comfortable," Blomgren said.

Mid-April is the target to have a plan in place for transportation.

"This gives families plenty of time to organize so they don't have that anxiety going into next August," Blomgren said.

From the second week of June through mid-July, teachers will move to their new buildings.

"We've got about a five-week window to tackle the movement," Blomgren said. "Teachers will take a couple of weeks to pack, we'll move the stuff for them, and by late July, everything should be in place so they can come back and get their rooms ready for the first day of school in mid-to-late August."

leaderpub.com

Local men sentenced to prison on CSC charges

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Correspondent

From left: Ward, Peters

CASSOPOLIS — Two area men have been sentenced to prison in Cass County Circuit Court on criminal sexual conduct related charges.

Michael Joseph Ward, 40, of Edwardsburg, pleaded guilty to first-degree criminal sexual conduct and was sentenced to 10 years to 40 years in prison. He has credit for 138 days already served and must pay $1,048 in fines and costs. He must register as a sex offender, submit to lifetime electronic monitoring and not have contact with anyone under age 18.

The incident occurred last year in Cass County against a five year old girl whose family contacted police last June. The 10 year prison sentence came as a result of a plea agreement that kept Ward from having to serve a mandatory term of 25 years in prison.

"At age 40, he has entered the heart of darkness," Cass County Prosecutor Victor Fitz said. "His repeated molestations of five year old girl is pure evil. He has a mindset of deep depravity, he has earned this 10 years in prison.

"If he does get out at some point, he needs to stay away from children," Fitz added. "This has changed life of this young child permanently and he needs to be punished for that."

Defense attorney Horia Neagos said that Ward has been "exceptionally remorseful" and agreed to plead in the case so that the young victim wouldn't have to testify and be further traumatized.

"He has not made any excuses," he said.

Cass County Circuit Court Judge Mark Herman said that Ward should consider himself fortunate that he wasn't getting a 25 year sentence.

"I'm sure you don't consider yourself overly fortunate, but you did receive a benefit," he said. "You spared the girl from testifying and that's the only decent thing you've done."

Meeting an underage girl on Snapchat and bringing her to stay in his home for three months proved to be a bad move for a Niles man. Nathaniel Alexander Peters was sentenced to prison recently in Cass County Circuit Court.

Peters, 25, of Leet Road near Niles, pleaded guilty to third degree criminal sexual conduct against a person 13 to 15 years old and was sentenced to 10 to 15 years in prison with credit for 147 days served and $1,048 in fines and costs. He must register as a sex offender and have no contact with anyone under age 18.

Peters was arrested last October after police came to his trailer to investigate a missing Alma, Michigan teen. The teen who was 14 said that she had met Peters on Snapchat and that he brought her to his home where they had sexual relations over three months. She also said they had shared sexually explicit photos and videos.

Fitz acknowledged that Peters had had a difficult childhood with his mother killing his father and being abused himself.

"He hasn't had the easiest of lives but he has to become a man and be responsible for his actions," he said. "He changed her life forever and took her away from her parents."

Defense attorney Nicholas Hogue asked for a lower prison sentence, noting Peters' childhood and untreated psychological problems.

"He has two young children, the trajectory of his life is not fixed in stone," he said. "The question is not if there should be accountability, there should be, but his need for a structured rehabilitation and treatment."

"I have had a lot of time to think about what I'd say to you," Peters told Judge Herman. "What I did was wrong, I can't lie. I just ask that you show mercy and forgiveness. I should have thought about my kids, but I didn't realize what I had until it was gone."

"You need to think about your kids when you're involved in incidents like this," Judge Herman said. "How would you feel if this happened to one of your children?"

"You said she told you she was 19 and you brought her here for sex," the judge added. "Once you met, you would know she's not 19. She had been there for three months. You also admitted you had sexually explicit photos and videos."

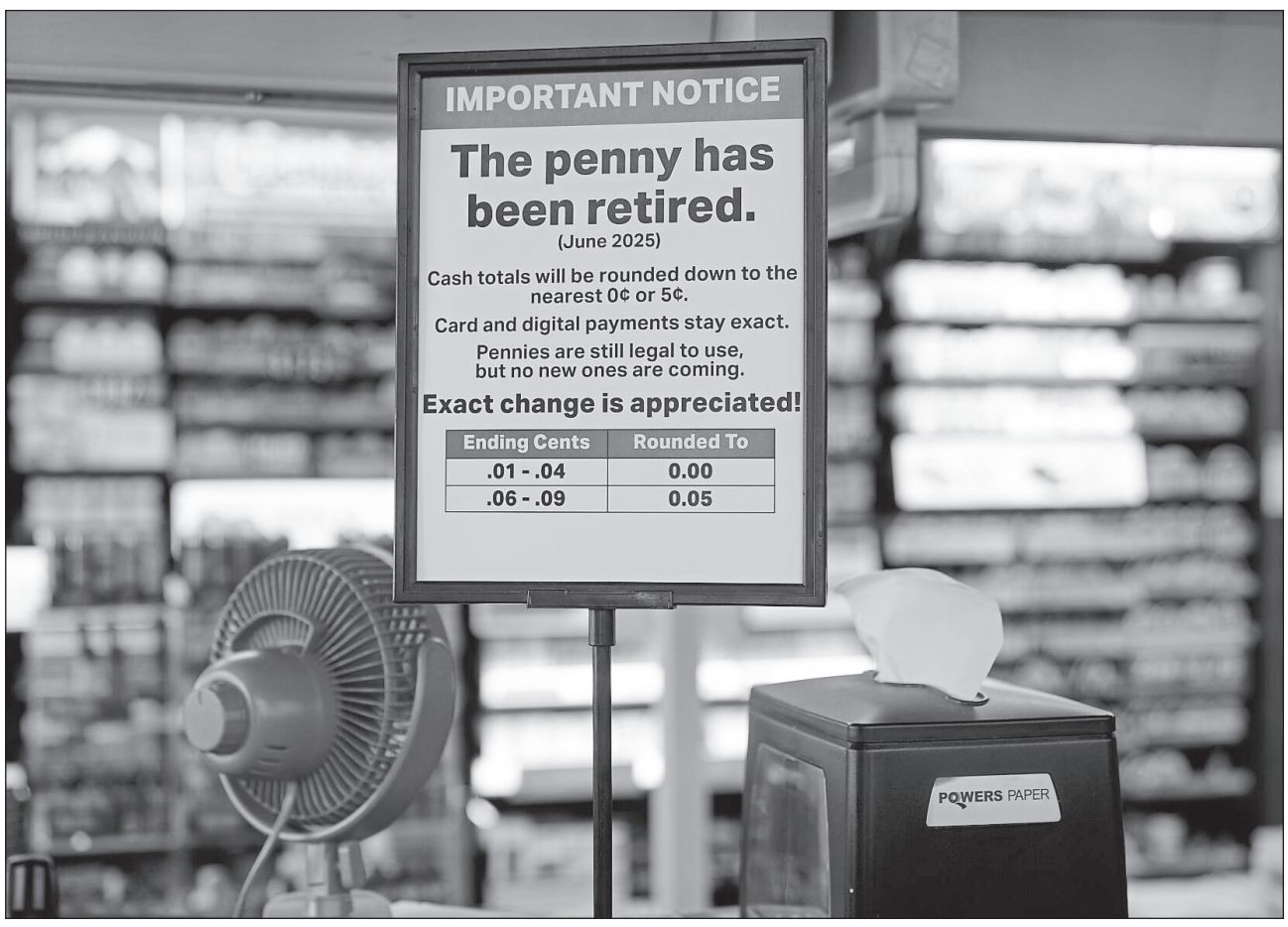
Judge Herman said he was concerned about Peters' past record as both a juvenile and adult. He noted that Peters was sentenced to prison as a teen, paroled at age 21 and now has a pending charge in Berrien County for failing to register as a sex offender.

"It looks like you don't care about the law or what society expects," the judge said. "You drove three hours to pick up a 14 year old girl. You had six hours to think about your decision and we can see what direction you took. You will do what you want to do whether it's right or wrong."

"You've spent half of your life as a sexual deviant," he added. "You're a grown man. You went to Alma and took her to your camper and kept her from her family. We here in Michigan find your actions inexcusable and reprehensible. Prison is the only alternative to protect society you're your predatory behavior."

Lawmakers rush to set rounding rules for when there are no pennies

By HANNAH FINGERHUT
Associated Press


IMPORTANT NOTICE
The penny has been retired.
(June 2025)
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Exact change is appreciated!
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Rounded To
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0.00
.06 - .09
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POWERS PAPER
Morry Gash / AP file
A sign in a Kwik Trip store shows the store will no longer be using pennies to give change, on Oct. 23 in Yorkville, Wis.

Months after the last of the United States' 1-cent coins were pressed, some states are beginning to offer their own 2 cents on the penny problem by setting rounding guidance for cash purchases.

President Donald Trump announced early last year an end to penny production, saying it was wasteful. It cost 3.7 cents to make each 1-cent coin in 2024, according to the U.S. Mint. The move led to a shortage of pennies in cash registers last summer, forcing consumers and businesses to confront a penniless future in which making exact change would be difficult.

The Treasury Department has said it will continue circulating the roughly 114 billion pennies that exist for "as long as possible." Pennies must still be accepted as payment.

One solution to the penny problem is rounding to the nearest nickel, using a practice called symmetrical rounding. If the final price, after taxes, ends in one, two, six or seven cents, payment in cash rounds down. For example, $1.91 or $1.92 becomes $1.90. If the price ends in three, four, eight or nine, cash payment rounds up. For $1.98 or $1.99, the consumer pays $2.

A bill introduced last year in Congress and passed out of the House financial services committee would apply symmetrical rounding across the country. U.S. Rep. Lisa McClain, R-Mich., said in an email the federal law is important to prevent a "confusing patchwork of state policies."

The bill hasn't been voted on in the House and would still need to move through the U.S. Senate before reaching Trump's desk.

Some states are looking to what's next

In the meantime, bills to deal with penniless cash transactions have passed both chambers and await the governor's signature in Arizona, Florida, Oregon, Tennessee, Virginia and Washington. Some states are proposing to allow businesses to round cash purchases, while others consider requiring it.

In Indiana, a bill signed into law this month by Republican Gov. Mike Braun tells businesses they must round cash purchases for all transactions that do not end in a zero or five. Lawmakers revised that provision in a second bill that makes rounding optional, which would take effect Sunday if Braun signs it into law.

In both bills, Indiana businesses can choose to always round cash purchases up to the nearest nickel, always round down or round up or down depending on the amount.

In Republican-led Tennessee, legislation makes symmetrical rounding exempt from legal claims under a state consumer protection law but does not require rounding.

"It is to provide safe harbor for private businesses," said Republican Rep. Charlie Baum, the bill sponsor in Tennessee, during floor debate.

Rounding bills have been introduced in about two dozen states since late last year, according to an Associated Press analysis using the bill-tracking service Plural.

Outside of lawmaking bodies, some state agencies have published guidelines to advise that rounding should happen after tax, and that businesses must make sure the full taxed amount still goes to the state.

Will consumers pay more with rounding?

Cash isn't used as ubiquitously since the rise in electronic payment methods. Still, about 8 in 10 U.S. adults said they recently used cash in a 2024 survey conducted by the Federal Reserve. Cash was more often used by older adults and those in lower-income households.

The Treasury wrote online that prices would be "rounded down just as often as they will be rounded up, so there should be no overall effect on consumer prices."

But researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond used a 2023 survey to show prices that didn't end in zero or five were especially likely to end in eight or nine. Payment amounts could be different when multiple items are purchased or depending on the tax rate, but overall, prices more often being rounded up would lead to millions of dollars gained by businesses and lost by consumers collectively, amounting to a few pennies lost per person.

Do people think it's fair?

As businesses have introduced rounding, some Americans have taken to social media to say they feel scammed, even if it is a penny or two at a time.

Nikki Capozzo-Hennessy, 50, said she tends to pay in cash because it makes her more conscious of her spending. The Trumbull, Connecticut, resident posted her grocery store receipt online when she noticed the rounding adjustment on a purchase of $8.73, with tax. The store chose to round down and she gained three cents.

Capozzo-Hennessy said it might feel taxing if she had to hand over extra pennies every time, but she also thinks it's practical to stick with one rule. She runs a food truck business and said they'd likely use symmetrical rounding to be consistent.

"At the end of the day it's three cents, but I can imagine with all the purchases that you make, it can add up," Capozzo-Hennessy said.

Washington state Rep. April Berg, who introduced a rounding bill there, said she understands people who feel frustrated losing a penny but that the elimination of the hard currency leaves little option.

"We did make sure that everyone is allowed to pay exactly what they owe," Berg said of her legislation.

What about the nickel?

The Treasury says ceasing penny production will save $56 million annually, but rounding could increase demand for nickels. The 5-cent coins also are costly to make, reaching nearly 14 cents each in 2024, according to the Mint.

The proposed federal legislation currently includes a potential cost-saving solution, allowing the Treasury to adjust the coin's composition to use cheaper zinc and nickel instead of copper and nickel.

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OPINION

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Constant technology changes throw seniors a curve – and add to caregivers' load

By DEBALEENA CHATTOPADHYAY
Assistant Professor of Computer Science, University of Illinois Chicago (The Conversation)

THE CONVERSATION

This past Christmas, I helped my parents choose a water filter. The latest "smart" models all came with a smartphone app that promised to monitor filter life, track water quality and automatically request service. Yet my father, age 75, and mother, 67, were quick to reject them in favor of a nondigital model.

"Every time it updates or I forget how to use it, we'll have to call you," my dad said.

As an only child living 8,000 miles (12,875 kilometers) away, I didn't need convincing. My parents are aging in place and don't need traditional caregiving – they cook, drive and manage their home just fine. Instead, I provide what I call technology caregiving: helping them with their digital activities of daily living, from online banking to booking theater tickets.

But as the tech industry shifts toward artificial intelligence agents and generative user interfaces – promising to make devices smarter than ever – I am bracing for this invisible workload to become heavier, not lighter. In addition to being a technology caregiver, I'm a computer scientist who studies human-computer interaction.

Technology caregiving

Technology caregiving is the act of helping someone use digital tools. While this isn't entirely new – people have long helped grandparents program VCRs and connect parents' desktop computers to the internet – the stakes have changed.

Today, digitization is ubiquitous. Helping with these tools is no longer just occasional unpaid tech support – it is a form of continuous caregiving essential for maintaining independence. For example, even the simple act of clipping coupons has gone digital – marginalizing older adults who are unable to navigate store apps to access these discounts.

People often view older adults as resistant to technology, but recent years – particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic – have shattered that myth. While gaps in internet access and device ownership remain, they are no longer major barriers to technology access.

The emerging crisis is not about access, but effective use. Many older adults are now online and willing to use these tools, but they require frequent help from family, friends or communities.

The innovation tax

The problem isn't just that devices and apps are getting complex; it's that they are constantly changing. Frequent software updates and shifting interfaces can be frustrating for all users, but they turn familiar tools into foreign concepts for older adults.

This unpredictability is about to accelerate. Take generative user interfaces, which designers can use to dynamically generate an interface in minutes. Pair them with AI agents, and the system can assume the designer's role, taking independent actions based on how it perceives a user's intent or need.

If the "Pay Bill" button is in a different place every third time you open a particular app because an AI decided to optimize the interface, you might feel perpetually incompetent if you can't quickly locate it. While the industry calls this personalization, for an older adult it is a moving target.

This relentless pace of change – even when intended to be helpful – is directly at odds with age-related cognitive changes. And this dynamic is continuing with the new generation of seniors. They may be more eager to adopt new tools than the last, but wanting to use technology is not the same as being able to use it when the rules are constantly changing.

To navigate a brand new or shifting interface, your brain relies on fluid intelligence: the ability to reason, solve novel problems and ignore distractions on the fly. Unlike the knowledge that people accumulate over time, fluid intelligence naturally declines with age.

When an app updates or an AI optimizes a layout, it forces the user to discard their hard-won mental models and start over. For an older adult, this isn't just a minor inconvenience; it is a taxing job for their working memory.

As an older adult participant in a study my colleagues and I conducted put it:

"I had a computer on my desk in 1980, OK, when nobody else did. So this is not a foreign language, but the changes that are made with little to no explanation and then things that you knew how to do have either changed or disappeared completely, that is the stuff that absolutely drives me, and I will tell you, every other older adult in America nuts."

Help the helper

I believe that the way forward is to stop treating tech support as an afterthought and start designing for the technology caregiver. Digital literacy training for seniors and encouraging designing technologies for all users are important but not enough; it's important to build tools that share the burden.

Two promising paths are emerging. First, cognitive accessibility features – like AI assistants that find buried buttons or provide real-time tech support – can offload tasks from the caregiver. Second, tools for caregivers are beginning to move beyond simply controlling device feature access to capabilities such as allowing authorized access for banking as co-users, or recording personalized instructions.

These tools will also need to be tailored: Family caregivers need different tools than community helpers like libraries and senior centers.

In the age of AI, innovation shouldn't be a tax on the aging brain – it should help bridge the digital divide.

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Bird losses are accelerating across North America, particularly in farming regions where agriculture is most intensive

By FRANÇOIS LEROY
Postdoctoral Researcher in Ecology, The Ohio State University (The Conversation)

THE CONVERSATION

Since the 1970s, the U.S. has lost billions of birds. We now know that those losses aren't just growing – they are accelerating in places with intensive human activity, particularly where agriculture and expanding communities are changing the landscape.

Bird population declines have been closely linked to pollution, use of chemicals and physical changes to their habitats.

But human pressures on nature are not just continuing; they are increasing at an accelerating rate. Indicators of human activity, such as population growth, economic growth and transportation use, rose more rapidly after the 1950s, as did measures of environmental change, from atmospheric carbon dioxide levels to tropical forest loss.

In a new study published in the journal Science, my colleagues and I found that bird populations are responding in the same way: Their declines are speeding up, particularly in regions dominated by intensive agriculture.

It's not just that there are fewer birds each year. In some places, each year brings larger losses than the one before.

Where bird populations are shrinking faster

Using data from the North American Breeding Bird Survey, we analyzed bird population changes for 261 species across the contiguous U.S. between 1987 and 2021.

We found that, on average, bird numbers declined by about 15 percent – for every six birds in 1987, there were only five three decades later. Nearly half of the species we examined showed significant population declines, with the strongest declines observed for the common grackle, the European starling and the red-winged blackbird.

The North American Breeding Bird Survey is one of the longest-running wildlife monitoring programs in the world. Since 1969, trained volunteers have counted birds along thousands of fixed routes across the U.S. and Canada during the breeding season, when birds are reproducing, nesting, laying eggs or raising young.

Because the survey spans decades, a continent and hundreds of species, it provides an unparalleled window into how bird populations are changing over time.

Most studies using this data focus on whether populations are increasing or decreasing. In our study, we asked a different question: Are those trends themselves speeding up or slowing down?

When we examined how the decline of birds evolved over time, a striking pattern emerged.

The losses were strongest in southern parts of the United States – a pattern consistent with previous research that linked bird declines to warm and warming regions. Many species have been found to struggle in hotter temperatures, or they shift their ranges toward cooler climates.

The Midwest, California and parts of the Mid-Atlantic region stood out as areas where bird declines are accelerating. Populations that were already shrinking in the late 1980s are now losing birds more rapidly than they did three decades ago.

These regions share a common feature: intensive agriculture. We measured agricultural intensity using indicators such as cropland area, fertilizer application and pesticide use around survey locations. Areas with higher agricultural intensity were more likely to have accelerating bird declines.

Why agriculture intensity can amplify decline

Modern agriculture transforms landscapes. Large cropland areas replace diverse habitats. Herbicides and pesticides used on farms reduce weeds and insects that many bird species depend on for food. Heavy machinery and reduced habitat diversity can limit nesting opportunities.

We cannot disentangle which agricultural practices are most responsible for the accelerating declines. Fertilizer use, pesticide application and land-use change often occur together. It is likely that multiple pressures interact to affect birds. However, studies have linked higher pesticide use to reductions in bird numbers, both directly through toxicity and indirectly through declines in insect prey. These findings suggest that chemicals may play an important role in amplifying population declines in agricultural regions.

We also found that agricultural intensity and temperature change may reinforce each other. Agricultural landscapes often lack shade trees, so they warm more than natural areas, potentially compounding climate-related stress on bird populations.

Why acceleration matters

Accelerating population declines are an early warning sign about birds' well-being. A steady decline is concerning, but when losses grow larger year after year, it means the situation is getting worse faster.

Monitoring acceleration can help identify emerging hot spots before populations reach low levels, providing an early warning for conservation action.

Birds are more than just familiar backyard species. They help control insect pests, disperse seeds and regulate ecosystems. Because they are well monitored and sensitive to environmental change, they often provide an early indication of broader ecological shifts.

Nearly 40 percent of U.S. land is used for agriculture. How these landscapes are managed will shape the future for many birds, and farmers are thus at the forefront to address the biodiversity crisis. It's also important to remember that agricultural workers themselves are the most exposed to the same chemicals that affect ecosystems, and a growing body of research has examined the health implications of pesticide exposure. Balancing food production, environmental sustainability and human health is a shared challenge.

Biodiversity responses to land management changes can occur quickly. So when habitats are restored or chemical pressures are reduced, birds and insects can return within years.

That potential for relatively rapid ecological recovery makes agricultural landscapes especially important. Our findings suggest that looking not only at how much biodiversity is changing, but also at how much those changes are speeding up, may offer a clearer picture of the pressures facing wildlife today.

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COA

From page A1

Council hears first readings for zoning amendments

In other business, the council had first readings for a pair of zoning ordinance amendments. The first was for an amendment to the code to include a noise ordinance based upon decibel limits for each zoning district. The proposed noise ordinance would prohibit residential properties from exceeding 65 decibels from 7:01 a.m. to 10:01 p.m. and 55 decibels from 10:01 p.m. to 7 a.m., commercial properties from exceeding 65 decibels from 7:01 a.m. to 10:01 p.m. and 65 decibels from 10:01 p.m. to 7 a.m. and industrial properties from exceeding 75 decibels from 7:01 a.m. to 10:01 p.m. and 75 decibels from 10:01 p.m. to 7 a.m.

"While 75 decibels is allowed within an industrial district, the ordinance measures noise as it crosses the property line from one zone to another," Anderson said. "In a commercial district, the decibel limit is 65. In the proposed ordinance, residential districts have a limit of 65 during the daytime and 55 at nighttime. This means any noise emanating from other zones into a residential district in the evening must be at 55 decibels or less. It is all about the receiving area; even if 75 is allowed within an industrial zone, that noise cannot exceed the limits of the receiving district."

Over the past several months, the city has received concerns regarding the potential impact of an expanded industrial use Data Center as described in a press release issued by the Hyperscale Data Inc. last year. While the city has yet to receive a permit application from the owners to expand operations, city officials have reviewed the ordinances that address concerns expressed to city council by local residents and other interested persons. After this review, city officials determined that developing an ordinance setting standards for decibel levels for each zoning classification could provide clarity to neighbors, businesses and enforcement personnel if faced with noise issues.

Even though the city has a general noise ordinance, it does not have specific decibel standards for ambient noise. While Dowagiac is not alone in having ordinances without specific standards, many communities in Michigan have codified measurable decibel standards.

"We previously had a very general policy, so we want to provide a quick overview of how the zoning code came into being and how it is constructed," Anderson said.

After studying noise ordinances from 30 Michigan communities, the police collected data from areas of the community where industrial zones abut residential districts. The surveyed areas included locations near Mennel Milling and Ameriwood, the former Fryman's Recycling facility on E. Telegraph, and the Southwest Michigan Business Center. Decibel readings were taken at several locations near these industrial zoned areas on four different days between Feb. 2-9, with readings taken during a.m. and p.m. hours.

Councilmember Breanna Bundy asked if the noise ordinance would negatively impact industrial businesses, Anderson said that the area with the highest level of noise, the Mennell/Ameriwood area, came in below the proposed prohibited decibel level with an average maximum level of 53.85 and a minimum of 45.53 over the four days of testing.

The second reading was for an ordinance to amend Section 22.5 of the Zoning Ordinance to amend the zoning map to change 414 West Street, the former Heddon manufacturing building, to a Planned Unit Development.

The owner of the property, Lance Lyons, aims to transition the property from its current industrial use to allow for high density residential dwellings with warehousing and/or commercial uses that are more compatible with the neighborhood. The PUD allows for all residential classifications as well as O-S, C-1, C-2, C-3 and commercial storage warehousing.

The approval of an ordinance or amendment is a two-step process. The council held the first reading on Monday and the final adoption will take place at the next council meeting.

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Chamber announces 2026 event dates

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

File photo

DOWAGIAC — The Greater Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce recently announced the organization's 2026 event dates.

The non profit business membership association hosts events and festivals over the course of the year that provide entertainment, opportunities to raise awareness of local businesses, and to spur positive economic impact in the community,

This year's slate of events will include:

- Summer Festival – July 18
- Under the Harvest Moon Festival – Oct. 10
- Christmas Open House – Nov. 12-14
- Candlelight Christmas Parade – Dec. 4

Early 2027

- Miss Dowagiac Scholarship Pageant – TBD January
- Ice Time Festival – February 6

Community members might note that missing from the line up are the Eggstravaganza, usually held before Easter, and the Rod and Roll Classic Auto Show, usually held in August.

"After much deliberation, the Board of Directors has decided to retire both the Eggstravaganza and the car show, " stated Kris Soenen, President of the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce. "Although we are hyper aware of how beloved these two events are by the community, we have made the decision to focus our resources and efforts on one festival per season. This will free up some resources to develop programs focused on strengthening member businesses."

Information regarding each of the Chamber's events can be found at dowagiacchamber.com and on the Greater Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce Facebook page. Community members interested in being a part of festival events as volunteers, vendors or to facilitate activities, can reach out using the "Contact Us" page on the website.

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Sports

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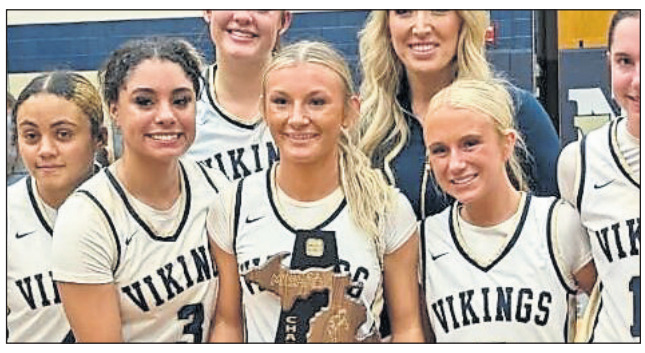
Niles wins district title, B2



Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

The Brandywine girls basketball team poses with their regional championship trophy.

The Prices' right

Price sisters power Brandywine to third straight regional title

By MAXWELL HARDEN
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BANGOR — The Prices were right for the Brandywine girls basketball team Wednesday night.

Sisters Mackenna and Zaya Price combined for 37 points in the Bobcats' 62-50 win over Kalamazoo Christian Wednesday to win the program's third straight Division 3 Regional Championship at Bangor High School. The win was also win No. 500 for Brandywine Head Coach Josh Hood.

Zaya led all scorers with 24 points and Mackenna had 13 points while Karleigh Byrd and Lily Gill scored 16 and 9 respectively.

"That's really what makes this group special, Hood said. "One night it's McKenna, one night it's Zaya, one night it's Karleigh Byrd. Brooke has led us in scoring before. When you can share the ball and the scoring comes from everywhere, it's hard to focus on this Brandywine team. When you get a group of kids that play for the name on the front, not the back, they know nobody has to be a superstar. They play for this program and this community, and that's why we've had this success."

The Prices scored 18 of Brandywine's first 22 points as the Comets struggled against Brandywine's pace on offense and pressure on defense. The Bobcats led by as many as 19 in the second quarter and took a 36-23 lead into halftime. The second half began much like the first with a Zaya Price basket to go up 38-25. The Bobcats pushed their lead back to 19 in the third and led 47-32 entering the fourth quarter.

The Comets pulled within single digits when a Lily Manion 3 made it a 55-46 game late in the fourth quarter but was not able get any closer.

"We had a lot of energy to push our team to do what we've been doing throughout the entire season," Mackenna said. "We know that once we got that first bucket, we had the flow of the game. We could control it, and we were definitely in control."

All-Stater Ella Vandusen led Kalamazoo Christian with 16 points and Reese Gernaat had 12 points and Manion eight. Despite having a size advantage in the front court, the Comets had no answer for Zaya – who scored 12 of her 24 in the first quarter – in the low post.

"I started working this summer on playing in the post. I love it because I get more opportunities to shoot and score—it's just a better position."

Mackenna has enjoyed playing with her younger sister this season and believes they bring out the best in each other.

Hood said the decision to utilize Zaya in the post more was made following the Brandywine's 55-44 loss to Otsego, its lone loss of the season.

"That Otsego game was an eye-opener for a lot of us. It started with the

See **PRICE**, page B1

'The standard never graduates'

Brandywine's Josh Hood earns 500th career win

By MAXWELL HARDEN
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BANGOR — Brandywine Head Coach Josh Hood does not like talking about himself or countless accolades he has piled up over the years. Luckily for him, his results do all of the talking for him.

The longtime Brandywine coach picked up his 500th career win Wednesday, a 62-50 win over Kalamazoo Christian in the Division 3 Regional Championship Game.

See **HOOD**, page B1

Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications

Brandywine Head Coach Josh Hood earned his 500th career victory Wednesday night.

Area wrestlers compete at state wrestling finals

By PMG STAFF

DETROIT — Cinthia Villegas of Dowagiac was the lone area wrestler to reach the state semifinals of the Individual State Wrestling Tournament at Ford Field.

Villegas notched a pair of pins before being pinned herself by Olivet's Kylee Malloy in the semifinals of the girls 140-pound weight class..

Villegas (30-4) will have a chance to wrestle for third Saturday.

Three area boys will be competing for places Saturday.

Chase Brawley (44-9) of Niles at 285 pounds in Division 2, Cameron White (39-9) of Dowagiac at 150 pounds in Division 3 and Elijah Wegoner (47-7) of Cassopolis at 175 pounds in Division 4 all went 2-1 Friday.

Boys
Division 2 Wrestling
Championship Round 1
190: Gabriel Smith (Edwardsburg) m.d. over Colton Winchell (Freeland) 17-7.
285: Chase Brawley (Niles) m.d. over Shawn Paszkowski (Cadillac) 18-6.
Quarterfinals
190: Gabriel Smith (Edwardsburg) was pinned by Don Spillers (Detroit Martin Luther King) 2:59.
285: Chase Brawley (Niles) was pinned by Layne O'Neil (Fowlerville) 3:10.
Consolation Round 2
190: Gabriel Smith (Edwardsburg) was pinned by John Breckel (Adrian) 4:01.
285: Chase Brawley (Niles) m.d. over Camden Thibeault (St. Clair Shores Lakeshore) 12-2.
Division 3
Championship Round 1
113: Rooney Olmedo (Dowagiac) was pinned by Roman Goulette (Ogenaw Heights) 3:29.
150: Cameron White (Dowagiac) lost decision to Levi Frazer (Yale) 5-3.
215: Lucas Zeiger (Buchanan) lost m.d. to Brady Warner (Napoleon) 11-1.
285: Khalif Reyna (Dowagiac) lost m.d. to Connor White (Kingsford) 11-3.
Consolation Round 1
113: Rooney Olmedo (Dowagiac) pinned Jonathan Kreider (Montrose) 1:30.
150: Cameron White (Dowagiac) m.d. over Auden Kennedy (Brooklyn Columbia Central) 12-1.
215: Lucas Zeiger (Buchanan) lost decision to Jake Hascall (Otisville-Lakeville Memorial) 11-8.
285: Khalif Reyna (Dowagiac) was pinned by Owen Perlor (Montrose) 3:42.
Consolation Round 2
113: Rooney Olmedo (Dowagiac) was pinned by Ryan Williams (Dundee) 2:51.
150: Cameron White (Dowagiac) beat Noah Szwed (Montrose) by forfeit.
Division 4
Championship Round 1
175: Elijah Wegoner (Cassopolis) lost decision to Harper Merchant (Ithaca) 10-5.
Consolation Round 1
175: Elijah Wegoner (Cassopolis) pinned Lucas Schllep (Whittemore-Prescott) 3:31.
Consolation Round 2
175: Elijah Wegoner (Cassopolis) beat Xzavier Hicks (Riverview Gabriel Richard) 16-9.
Girls
Championship Round 1
120: Tess Brawley (Niles) was pinned by Brooklin Armstrong (Kent City) 3:36.
140: Cinthia Villegas (Dowagiac) pinned Peyton Huston (Brooklyn Columbia Central) 1:12.
Quarterfinals
140: Cinthia Villegas (Dowagiac) pinned Kaycie Moldenhauer (Atlanta) :39.
Consolation Round 1
120: Tess Brawley (Niles) was pinned by Stella Straub (Novi) 1:23.
Semifinals
140: Cinthia Villegas (Dowagiac) was pinned by Kylee Malloy (Olivet) 3:51.

Photo courtesy of Tanya Hagen

Dowagiac's Cinthia Villegas was the lone area wrestler to reach the state semifinals of the Individual State Wrestling Tournament at Ford Field.

Giants re-sign Murphy

By PMG STAFF

MURPHY

NEW YORK — The Giants have re-signed outside linebacker Caleb Murphy, the team announced Tuesday.

The former Dowagiac standout, who was acquired off waivers by the Giants late last season from the Patriots, was set to become an exclusive rights free agent when the new league year begins at 4 p.m. Wednesday. The terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Murphy, 6-3 and 254 pounds, has played in 19 career games for the Titans (2023-24), Chargers (2024-25), and Patriots (2025).

He did not appear in a game with the Giants after joining the team on Dec. 16.

Murphy appeared in 11 games last season with the Chargers and Patriots and registered seven tackles, one quarterback hit, a half-sack and seven special teams tackles.

Before going undrafted in 2023, he played in 29 games in two seasons at Ferris State (2020-22) after beginning his collegiate career at Grand Valley State (2019).

Murphy totaled 156 tackles, 60.5 tackles for loss, 40.0 sacks, and eight forced fumbles at Ferris State and helped the team win consecutive Division II National Championships.

In 2022, his 25.5 sacks set the NCAA single-season record while his 39 tackles for loss tied another mark. Murphy also became the first non-FBS player to win the Ted Hendricks award, given to the nation's top defensive end.

Victorious Vikings

Niles beats Berrien Springs, earns first district title since 2018

By MAXWELL HARDEN
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Maxwell Harden / Leader Publications
The Niles Vikings celebrate winning the Division 2 district title against Berrien Springs Friday at Niles High School.

NILES — The Niles girls basketball team gave the home crowd plenty to celebrate last week.

The Vikings rallied from a 10-point deficit and rolled to a 69-53 win over Berrien Springs Friday, March 6 to claim the Division 2 district title, their first since 2018. The Vikings advanced to the regional semifinals where they fell to Otsego 70-39.

"You have no idea how incredibly proud I am," Workman said. "We faced a lot of adversity. It's been about two and a half years with this group. It's been quite the ride; they bought into the culture and they worked really hard. We definitely made it happen. I'm so proud of them."

Trailing 27-17 midway through the second quarter, Elynne Hoyt sparked a 10-3 run to trim the deficit to 30-27 at halftime. The Vikings kept the momentum going into the third quarter, with a Maddie Zache 3-pointer giving the Vikings a 34-32 lead they would not relinquish. Niles outscored Berrien Springs 24-11 in the quarter to take a 51-41 lead into the fourth.

"We started experiencing breakdowns before halftime," said Berrien Springs Coach Rodney Alexander. "We had some injuries come up but we had some mental breakdowns. The third quarter was the game."

Tanaya Brown continued the Vikings' strong play with a fast break lay-in to push the lead to 53-41. The senior scored six of her 14 points in the fourth quarter to help the Vikings extend their lead to as many as 18 in the fourth.

"I think we really worked as a team in this game," Hoyt said. "Everyone was able to step up and make big plays and at the end of the day, we just wanted it more."

Workman was impressed with Brown and Gianna Ball's defensive effort against Zion Ellis, who scored six of her 20 points in the second half.

"We started to deny her and tried to eliminate her and their offense as much as possible. Tayana and Gianna did a wonderful job of that, and I really liked the steals," Workman said. "We also went into our press and that led to a lot more great opportunities."

"We saw our chance and we wanted it – It was ours from the get-go," Brown said. "Our heads were in the game today."

For Brown and fellow seniors, the win was a culmination of four years of hard work. After winning nine games total the previous three years, including a winless season in 2022-23, the Vikings have won 13 games and counting, the program's most since 2014.

"It means a lot," Brown said. "The girls and I worked hard and we did this for us."

After scoring 29 in a win over Lakeshore in the semifinals, Hoyt followed up that performance with a game-high 27 points in the district championship game.

"This is what you dream about," Hoyt said. "This is what you work for and I'm so excited that I was able to do this."

"She's a dawg," Workman said. " She truly is an all-around amazing kid and an all-around amazing player. I'm extremely comfortable with her. She's a "next play" type of girl; if she makes a mistake, she'll move on to the next one and give us something new."

Ali Gerrits had 10 for Niles and Jessie Thornton added seven points. Kathryn Bergan had 14 for Berrien Springs while Adeline Weber added 11.

The loss brings the Shamrocks' season to an end with a 12-11 record. While disappointed with the outcome, Alexander is proud of the growth his team has achieved this season. Ellis eclipsed the 1,000-point plateau and Bergan made first team all-conference while leading the Shamrocks to their third straight district championship game appearance.

"We've been through a lot," he said. "We lost a lot last year and improved this year. We have a lot of freshmen so the future is bright. We brought the culture back."

Workman, one of the area's most decorated prep basketball players, returned to coach her alma mater to raise the Vikings back to prominence. While there is more work to be done, Workman is proud of the progress her team has made in three years.

""It means a lot. I played here, I won four district championships here," she said. "It's something that is necessary and they deserve it. They put in a lot of time, effort, and work."

"Coach made us who we are today and she did it for us," Brown said. "She made us better."

The victory continues a special season for the Niles' basketball teams, with the boys and girls winning district titles in the same season for the first time since 2003. The Vikings hope to continue their run Monday against regional host Otsego. The Wolverine Conference champions swept the Vikings during the regular season but that was then. This is now.

"We're just going to keep our heads down and keep working and keep making the adjustments we need to make and keep plugging away," Workman said. "The big thing is just competing and these girls deserve that."

Otsego 70, Niles 39

A poor start ended Niles' girls basketball season Monday night.

No. 9-ranked Otsego raced out to a quick 13-1 lead and coasted past the Vikings 70-39 in the Division 2 regional semifinals.

Playing on its home floor, the Wolverine Conference champ Otsego used its pressure defense to frustrate Niles all night long. The Bulldogs forced 28 Viking turnovers, using them to score 24 easy points, while advancing to Wednesday's regional title game against No. 1-ranked Grand Rapids South Christian (25-0).

Otsego, which beat Niles 49-30 and 78-32 during the regular season, led 30-13 at halftime and the game never got closer than that in the second half. The Bulldogs led by as many as 36.

Audrey Lingbeek led Otsego with 16 points, including four 3-pointers. Brook Smallmon added 12.

Niles had Jessie Thornton and Tanaya Brown with 13 points apiece. But Elynne Hoyt, who had games of 29 and 27 in the two Viking district wins, was limited to three. Hoyt did grab eight rebounds.

Thornton did end her career with 1,042 points.

Niles finished 13-12 and has improved dramatically during Sarah Workman's three years as coach. The Vikings were 0-22 in 2023. Niles ended 2-20 in 2024, Workman's first year and improved to 7-17 a year ago, before closing out the best season at the school since 2014.

Workman will have some reloading to do next year. The Vikings graduate Thornton, Brown, Maddie Zache and Ali Gerrits from its top seven.

Friday, March 6

NILES 69, BERRIEN SPRINGS 53

At Niles

BERRIEN SPRINGS (53)
Adeline Weber 11, Zion Ellis 20, Kathryn Bergan 14, Briann Wolff 2, Dylan Rospierski 2, Kamari Holmes 4, Tamiya McKnight 0. Totals 21 10-18 53.
NILES (69)
Jessie Thornton 7, Tamaya Brown 14, Gianna Ball 3, Maddie Zache 3, Elynne Hoyt 27, Ali Gerrits 10, Austyn Rohacs 4. Totals 20 23-34 69.

Berrien Springs	**20**	**30**	**41**	**53**
Niles	**15**	**27**	**51**	**69**

3-point baskets – Berrien Springs 1 (Weber 1), Niles 5 (Hoyt 3, Ball 1, Zache 1). Total fouls (fouled out) – Berrien Springs 23 (McKnight), Niles 14 (Ball). Records – Berrien Springs 11-9, Niles 13-11.

Monday, March 9

OTSEGO (70), NILES 39

At Otsego

NILES (39)
Jessie Thornton 13, Tanaya Brown 13, Gianna Ball 5, Maddie Zache 0, Elynne Hoyt 3, Ali Gerrits 4, Austyn Rohacs 1. Totals 14 10-19 39.
OTSEGO (70)
Brooke Smallmon 12, Peyton Johnson 7, Mya Engbers 8, Madden Fitzpatrick 6, Kendall Hough 8, Audrey Lingbeek 16, Hallie Prough 7, Olivia Hildebrand 6. Totals 28 7-15 70.

Niles	**7**	**13**	**19**	**39**
Otsego	**16**	**30**	**50**	**70**

3-point baskets – Niles 1 (Thornton 1), Otsego 7 (Lingbeek 4, Hough 2, Prough 1). Total fouls – Niles 13, Otsego 15. Records – Niles 13-12, Otsego 20-2

All-Southwest Wrestling Team selected for 2025-26 season

By PMG STAFF

The All-Southwest Wrestling Team for 2025-26 has been selected, honoring the best wrestlers in Southwest Michigan.

Decatur's Tyler Morales was named boys Wrestler of the Year after winning the Division 4 state title at 157 pounds.

Joining Morales on the boys first team were three state runners-up – Decatur teammate Rowan Bradford (190) and Coloma's Bryce Cartwright (106) and Brody Ashley (113). Lakeshore's Pilot Swab (120), Paw Paw's Kholby Armijo (165), and Marcellus' Brock Woodhouse (285) all made the first team after third-place finishes at the state meet.

Also on the first team were Buchanan's John Keser (126), Cooper Mabry (132) and Lucas Zeiger (215), Lakeshore's Bryson Coyer (138), South Haven's Zayden Rowland (144), Dowagiac's Cameron White (150), and Cassopolis' Elijah Wagoner (175).

Lakeshore's Chase Jacobs (106), a state runner-up, was a standout on the second team. He was joined on the second team by Lakeshore teammates Judd Riggins (126) and Joelan Coyer (144), Dowagiac's Rooney Olmedo (113) and Weski Wesaw (150), Decatur's Kolton Burns (120), Joel Pena (132) and Brody Mead (165), Niles' William Turnbull (138) and Chase Brawley (285), St. Joseph's Riley Halverson (157) and Mitch Culver (175), Edwardsburg's Gabe Smith (190), and Bangor's Enrique Macedo (215).

Receiving honorable mention were Bangor's Aiden Munoz (120), Wyatt Schneider (144), Brenden Jackson (175) and Jorge Dominguez (190); Berrien Springs' Kai Borden (106), Cale Johnson (132) and Caylen Tate (138); Buchanan's Aaron York (150); Cassopolis' Cameron Westphal (132), Easton Mitchell (138), Conor Turnbow (157) and Alan Wegner (165); Coloma's Lucadis Fonseca (126) and Joe Clayton (215); Decatur's Colton Cady (106), Diego Arellano-Hurtado (106), Reid Bowlby (113), Christopher West (126), Ryder Gardner-Moore (138), Aiden Wiggins (165) and Parker Wiggins (175); Dowagiac's Jacob Villegas (144), Brody Brewer (175), Tyler Jansen (215) and Khalif Reyna (285); Edwardsburg's Cale Myers (175); Hartford's Linken Birkhead (165) and Mason Mireles (190); Lakeshore's Cris Escobar (113), Ja'Marion Clark (132), Jordan Schmidt (132), Terreon Mitchell (150) and Carter Byerle (157); Lawton's AJ Terry (106) and Cameron Vyverman (144); Marcellus' Marvin Jones (215); Paw Paw's Gunner Gale (190); River Valley's Callan Davis (165); South Haven's Kenan Harris (190) and Tyler Moorehouse (285); St. Joseph's Logan Case (113), Keegan LeClear (120), Bryant Jennings (150), Brayden Malone (157) and Collin Sahs (285); and Watervliet's JT Isbrecht (120).

Decatur's Mitch Kennedy was the boys Coach of the Year.

Lakeshore's Emma Baker (115) and Dowagiac's Cinthia Villegas (140) were the girls Co-Wrestlers of the Year. Both took third place at state in their brackets.

They were joined on the first team by Lakeshore's Marley Flaga (100); South Haven's Maddie Moore (105) and Kaelyn Adamson (110); Bangor's Isabel Marin-Hernandez (120); Buchanan's Brynn Mabry (125) and Kadence Ashe (145); Decatur's Elyse Morales (130); Watervliet's Brooklyn Woollett (135) and Elloise Norman (235); Dowagiac's Bailey Ottinger (155); Hartford's Emma Hartline (170); and Bloomingdale's Evalyn Hegelmann (190).

The girls second team included Niles' Bianca Martinez-Sandoval (100) and Tess Brawley (120); Watervliet's Madalein Myers (105); Berrien Springs' Nellie Patsika (110) and Josie Burchett (190); Paw Paw's Sophia Fonseca (115) and Natalie Mansfield (145); Dowagiac's Arimani Wakefield (125); Coloma's Nevaeh Gilson (130) and Destini Clemons (235); Lawton's Gabriella Hayes (235); Hartford's Taliyah Mendoza (140); and Marcellus' Makayla McWilliams (155) and Memory Sylvester (170).

Paw Paw's Holly Williams was the girls Coach of the Year.

HOOD

From page B1

Hood said he does not spend much time reflecting on the number of wins his teams have piled up. He will leave that for when he retires somewhere down the road.

"All the attention should be on the girls, the Regional Champions," he said. "When I'm older one day, walking the beach with a non-alcoholic piña colada, I'll probably reflect and think this is pretty darn cool. Hopefully, my kids and grandkids can be proud of it. But right now, this is all about the Brandywine kids. 500 wins happened because of the kids we have here. I'm honored to be their coach and proud of these Regional Champions."

Hood, 48, is in his 17th season of coaching the Brandywine girls basketball team. He took an up-and-coming program, which had just come off a district championship, and turned it into a state power. Since he became the head coach in 2009, Brandywine has posted a record of 374-39, which includes 13 district championships, 10 regional titles, three trips to the state semifinals and one state finals appearance. Hood is proud of those numbers, but is quick to point out that you do not achieve that kind of success without great players and assistant coaches.

He thanked assistant coaches Kalie Wieger, Frelen Gowen, Mackenzie Cass, Tammy Lee, Nicole Price and Dave Roeder for their roles in the team's success.

"In a day and age when coaches are leaving by the dozens, because coaching is hard, we've had zero parent meetings at Brandywine this year," he said. "We've had zero girls meet their parents at halftime to get instructions. I've had zero girls miss practice. I'm the luckiest coach in the world and I'm having as much fun as I've ever had. The parents let their kids be coached hard, the girls are okay with being coached hard and the end result is a well-oiled machine."

To get to 500-wins, Hood was 8-13 his one season of coaching girls at Coloma and 54-16 as the Comets' boys coach for three seasons. Hood coached both the boys and girls teams for one year at Coloma. He then went to Cassopolis to take over the Rangers' boys basketball team. At Cassopolis, Hood was 63-30 in four seasons. His total record stands at 500-98.

As a fan of Notre Dame Head Football Coach Marcus Freeman, Hood said Freeman's mantra "Choose Hard" embodies his program.

"He always says 'choose hard.' The girls that play basketball at Brandywine choose hard. We've won over 90 percent of our games in 17 years and we've never made a cut in our program. You would think people would be dying to play here and chase championships, but if you're going to play at Brandywine, you're choosing hard because you're going to work at it six or seven days a week and give everything you've got. That's why these girls are leaders in our community on and off the court."

At Brandywine, the tradition of excellence is entrenched in the community. The program is now 99-7 over the last four seasons, the most wins in a four-year stretch by any area high school basketball team. Junior guard Mackenna Price embodies that tradition as a second-generation Bobcat player along with her sister, Zaya. Her mother was a member of the programs' first Final Four appearance.

Mackenna, who scored 13 points to help the Bobcats win a regional title Wednesday, believes Hood brings out the best in her and her teammates.

"It makes me feel amazing knowing that he was the one who pushed us," she said. "We couldn't have done it without him. He pushed us very, very hard to get to where we've been all season and to where we are now. He's just a great coach overall."

While dozens of players have graduated from the program over the years, as Hood likes to say, "the standard never graduates."

"The standard never varies," he said. "Three of those starters tonight have sisters who played for me that were All-State players. The Prices, their mom was on the first Final Four team at point guard. These are legacy kids; they've been in our 'kiddy cats' program since they were born. These are 12 and 13-year players in our youth program. It's what our program does. I'm lucky to be the facilitator, but it is a network of people that make this special. For a small public school to win 10 Regional championships in 17 years says a lot about the kids and the support we have."

PRICE

From page B1

coach not being very good because I was playing her more on the perimeter, and [Otsego Head Coach Tony Kochar] is a great friend of mine and his team woke us up a little bit. Since Zaya has been inside, she's averaging something like 17 points and 12 rebounds a game. She is a phenomenal kid and a phenomenal talent. She's going to be one of the best to ever wear a Brandywine jersey."

"It's a struggle sometimes but we've gotten used to it so it's not too chaotic between us," Mackenna said. "We're more controlled together now. It's great; we see each other really good on the court… I give her the assists and she goes in and scores. She couldn't do it without me, and I couldn't do it without her."

The Bobcats will face Hart (16-9) at 7 p.m. Tuesday at Kalamazoo Loy Norrix High School. The Pirates defeated Kent City 51-49 in the regional finals. Hood said the team will use its six days to rest and get a game plan together.

"The thing I've always appreciated about our girls is their commitment," Hood said. "They're never content with just winning a District or a Regional. When they came to work on Saturday, they knew it was back to work because they want to be one of the top teams in Division 3 basketball."

BRANDYWINE 62, KALAMAZOO CHRISTIAN 50

At Bangor

KALAMAZOO CHRISTIAN (50)
Reese Gernaat 12, Lily Manion 8, Ellory Zuiderveen 2, Elli VanDusen 16, Reagan Zuiderveen 6, Ava Thomas 4, Elli Richmond 2. Totals 18 7-13 50.
BRANDYWINE (62)
Karleigh Byrd 9, Zaya Price 24, Mackenna Price 13, Lily Gill 16, Brook Brumitt 0. Totals 21 19-27 62.

K. Christian	**10**	**23**	**32**	**50**
Brandywine	**22**	**36**	**46**	**62**

3-point baskets – Kalamazoo Christian 5 (Gernaat 2, Manion 2, VanDusen 1), Brandywine 1 (Byrd 1). Total fouls (fouled out) – Kalamazoo Christian 20 (Manion, ZE. Zuiderveen), Brandywine 12. Records – Kalamazoo Christian 19-5, Brandywine 25-1

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0500 MERCHANDISE

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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
Cass COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2025-325-DE
Hon. Carol M. Bealor

Court address Court & telephone no.
Law & Courts Building, 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031

Estate of: Keith A. Kirwan, Deceased
Date of birth:* 11/12/1963

TO ALL CREDITORS:**

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Keith A. Kirwan, died 10/21/2018. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Mai Vo Kirwan, personal representative, or to both the probate court at Law & Courts Building, 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 03/09/2026

Jeffrey R. Holmstrom P29405
Attorney name **Bar no.**

Mai Vo Kirwan
Personal representative

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
COUNTY OF BERRIEN

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE OF HEARING

FILE NO. 2026-0149-DE-R

In the matter of: Caroll Ann Stuckey, deceased

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS including Patty Widell, Connie Jackson and Cindy Smith whose address(es) is/are unknown and whose interest in the matter may be barred or affected by the following:
TAKE NOTICE: A hearing will be held on Tuesday, March 31, 2026, at 09:20 a.m. Via Zoom-Meeting ID-309-418-1454 before Judge Brian S. Berger P34678 for the following purpose:

Petition for Probate and/or Appointment of Personal Representative.

03/05/2026
Date

John R. Colip P25250
Attorney **Bar no.**
12 Longmeadow Village Dr, Ste 100
Address
Niles, MI 49120
City, state, zip
269-591-6915
Telephone

Judy Wolff
Petitioner name
1001 Shotgun Lane
Address
Millsap, TX 76066
City, state, zip
940-682-5903
Telephone

Howard Charter Township
Cass County, Michigan
Notice of Weed Ordinance Enforcement
March 6, 2026

Section 302.4.1 The Township shall give notice by publication in a newspaper of general circulation in the Township during the month of March.

Weeds and/or plant growth in violation of this ordinance not destroyed/cut by May 1st of 2026, as required by this Ordinance may be destroy/cut by the Township, and that the owner of any such land shall be charged with the expenses incurred by the Township to destroy/cut such weeds/plants growth as many times as is necessary to keep the land in compliance with this ordinance, and that the Township shall have a lien against the land for the amount of such expenses, and that such lien shall be enforced in the manner provided by state law for the enforcement of real property tax liens.

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
CASS COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO.
2026-015-DE

Court address
60296 M-62,
Cassopolis, MI 49031
telephone no.
269-445-4454

Estate of:
Scott Bradley Rajski
Date of birth:* 02/03/1967

TO ALL CREDITORS:**

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Scott Bradley Rajski, died 11/08/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Bradley Scott Huber-Rajaski, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

03/04/2026
Date

Brian M. Holt P64659
Attorney name Bar no.
210 E. Main St, Ste 85
Address
Niles, Michigan 49120
City, state, zip
269.262.1984
Telephone no.

Bradley Scott Huber-Rajaski
Personal representative
2563 Genes Circle
Address
Niles, MI 49120
City, state, zip
765-265-0311
Telephone no.

The following vehicles will be sold at auction at 10am March 28, 2026, at 52072 IN 933, South Bend, IN 46637 for charges owed:

2017 GMC Terrain
2GKALMEK2H6144928 **$2085**

2015 Nissan Sentra
3N1AB7AP5FL649424 **$2210**

AS A DEBT COLLECTOR, WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT AND ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. ATTENTION HOMEOWNER: IF YOU ARE A MILITARY SERVICE MEMBER ON ACTIVE DUTY, IF YOUR PERIOD OF ACTIVE DUTY HAS CONCLUDED LESS THAN 90 DAYS AGO, OR IF YOU HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO ACTIVE DUTY, PLEASE CONTACT THE ATTORNEY FOR THE PARTY FORECLOSING THE MORTGAGE AT THE TELEPHONE NUMBER STATED IN THIS NOTICE. Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement – Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM. on April 15, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default having been made in the terms and conditions of a certain mortgage made by James Snyder and Shella Ann Havener of Cass County, Michigan, Mortgagor to Fifth Third Bank (Western Michigan) dated the 28th day of May, 2019, and recorded in the office of the Register of Deeds, for the County of Cass and State of Michigan, on the 3rd day of July, 2019, Book 1157, Page 24, Instrument No. 154453 of the Cass County Records on which mortgage there is claimed to be due, at the date of this notice, for principal of $96,044.48 plus accrued interest at 5.00000% percent per annum. Which said premises are described as follows: All that certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Town of Howard, in the County of Cass and State of Michigan and described as follows to wit: Lot 50 Yankee Heights, according to the plat thereof recorded in Liber 1 of Plats, Page 153, Cass County Records Commonly known as: 2550 Juniper Road, Niles, MI 49120 Tax ID: 1402022005000 If the property is sold at a foreclosure sale the borrower, pursuant to MCLA 600.3278 will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. The redemption period shall be six months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. FinCEN reporting will be required of all successful purchasers, absent a lawful exemption. Dated: March 14, 2026, By: Benjamin N. Hoen #P-81415 Weltman, Weinberg & Reis Co., L.P.A. 5990 West Creek Road, Suite 200 Independence, OH 44131 Telephone: 216-739-5100 Fax: 216-363-4034 Email: bhoen@weltman.com WWR#: 22-000663-1 (03-14)(04-04)

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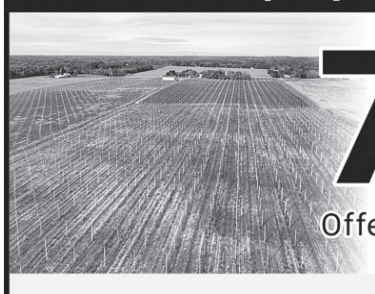

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& Edward D Boyer • 574.215.7653

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0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT- FAMILY DIVISION
Cass COUNTY

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2026-021-NC
2026-022-NC
Hon. Carol M. Bealor

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE OF HEARING REGARDING PETITION FOR NAME CHANGE

Court address: 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031
Court telephone no.
269-445-4454

In the matter of:
Maria Kathleen Worthington & Caylin Riley Worthington

TO ALL PERSONS. including (specify non-custodial parent's name here, if applicable) whose address is unknown and whose interest in the matter may be barred or affected by the following:
TAKE NOTICE: Sarah Marie Bedell has filed a petition for name change. A name change hearing will be held on April 15, 2026, at 1:00 pm. at Cass County Probate Court, 60296 M-62, Courtroom #20, Cassopolis, MI 49031 before Judge Carol M. Bealor to change the names of: Maria Kathleen Worthington to Maria Kathleen Bedell and Caylin Riley Worthington to Caylin Riley Bedell.

Annual Performance Report for Housing The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indian's **Annual Performance Report for Housing** is available for any residents to review. You can view it on our website at Housing Programs – Pokagon Band of Potawatomi or come and review it at the Housing & Community Development office beginning Monday, February 23 through Monday, March 23, 2026. The address for Housing & Community Development is 57824 Potawatomi Trail, Dowagiac, MI 49047.
Migwetth Thank you,

White Space Sells

0900 LEGALS

SILVER CREEK TOWNSHIP
February 11, 2026
Budget Special Meeting
Summary

Meeting Called to Order at 5:02pm. Present: Braman, Honn, Behnke, Barnes. Stockwell joined at 5:08pm. The budget was discussed for the upcoming fiscal year. Motion to approve the Zoning Administrator salary increase to $38,064 was approved after a roll call vote. Special meeting adjourned at 6:15pm.

JESS HONN, CLERK

Classifieds Make A Cash Connection!

ANTIQUE & ARTISAN SHOW
TRI KAPPA BENEFIT
Orthwein Pavilion @ RV Hall of Fame
21565 Executive Pkwy.
Elkhart, IN
Saturday, March 21st 9-5
Sunday, March 22nd 10-3
$5 for 2-day ticket
Homemade sloppy joes & desserts for sale.
Proceeds benefit local charities and fund high school scholarships

CITY OF NILES PUBLIC NOTICE

"TO CUT NOXIOUS WEEDS, GRASSES AND UNCULTIVATED VEGETATION BY MAY 1, 2026"
TAKE NOTICE that pursuant to Ordinance #332, adopted by the Niles City Council, October 14, 1991, all grasses and uncultivated vegetation (except trees, shrubs, bushes, wildflowers, cultivated flowers, ground cover plants, or gardens) exceeding ten (10) inches in height growing on improved property and all noxious weeds, Canada thistle (Circium arvense) or other thistle, dodders (any species of Cuscuta), mustards (charlock, black mustard and Indian mustard, species of Brassica or Sinapis), wild carrot (Daucus carota), bindweed (Convolvulus arvensis), perennial sowthistle (Sonchus arvensis), hoary alyssum (Berteroa incana), ragweed (Ambrosia elatior 1.) and poison ivy (rhus toxicodendron), poison sumac (Toxicodendron vernis) or other plants such as pigweed, duckweed or milkweed which are regarded as a common nuisance or detrimental to the public health and welfare, on property owned or occupied by you must be cut, removed, destroyed or eradicated in a manner permitted by law by **MAY 1, 2026.** Failure to do so, shall cause the City of Niles to have said growths cut, removed, destroyed or eradicated and the cost and expenses incurred shall be charged against the premises as a special assessment.
Copies of said ordinance are available on the city's website at www.nilesmi.org or by calling the Building Safety Division 269-683-2374 ext. 5050.

Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Cass County, starting promptly at 10:00 AM on 4/1/2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Names of Mortgagor(s): Ronald Reeves. Original mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for Quicken Loans, LLC. Date of mortgage: 4/29/2021. Mortgage recorded on 5/7/2021 as Document No. 178441, in Liber 1195, Page 1573. Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Rocket Mortgage, LLC. Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: $184,942.67 Mortgaged premises: Situated in Cass County, and described as: LAND SITUATED IN THE TOWNSHIP OF HOWARD, COUNTY OF CASS, STATE OF MICHIGAN, IS DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: LOT(S) 8 OF HORTON ACRES ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED IN LIBER 1-H OF PLATS, PAGE 353 OF CASS COUNTY RECORDS. Commonly known as 2725 Horton Ct, Niles, MI 49120. The redemption period will be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless the property is abandoned or used for agricultural purposes. If the property is determined abandoned under MCL 600.3241a, the redemption period will be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days after the statutory notice, whichever is later. If the property is determined abandoned under MCL 600.3241, the redemption period will be 1 month from the date of such sale. If the property is presumed to be used for agricultural purposes pursuant to MCL 600.3240(16), the redemption period is 1 year from the date of such sale. The redemption period may be extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. If the above referenced property is sold at a foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of Act 236 of 1961, under MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Date of Notice: 02/28/2026. Codilis & Moody, P.C. 15W030 North Frontage Road, Suite 100 Burr Ridge, IL 60527 (313) 536-2500. This law firm is a debt collector. C&M File 23-26-00066 (02-28)(03-21)

THE TOWNSHIP OF JEFFERSON
FRANCHISE GRANTED TO
SEMCO Energy Gas Company

Ordinance No. 2026-4

An Ordinance, granting to SEMCO Energy Gas Company, a Michigan corporation, its successors and assigns, the right, power and authority to lay, maintain and operate gas mains, pipes and services on, along, across and under the highways, streets, alleys, bridges, waterways, and other public places, and to conduct a local gas business in the Township of Jefferson, located in Cass County, Michigan, for a period of thirty years.

THE TOWNSHIP OF JEFFERSON ORDAINS:

Section 1. GRANT OF FRANCHISE. The Township of Jefferson, located in Cass County, Michigan (the "Township"), hereby grants to SEMCO Energy Gas Company, a division of SEMCO Energy, Inc., a Michigan corporation, its successors and assigns, (the "Grantee") the right, power and authority to construct, lay, operate, maintain and replace in the public streets, highways, alleys and other public places in the Township of Jefferson, Michigan, all needful and proper gas pipes, mains, conductors, service pipes and other apparatus and facilities requisite for the manufacture, transmission and distribution of gas for all purposes to the Township of Jefferson, and the inhabitants thereof, and for conducting gas elsewhere to supply neighboring cities, villages and other territories supplied with gas by said Grantee, for a period of thirty years.

Section 2. CONSIDERATION. In consideration of the rights, power and authority hereby granted, Grantee shall faithfully perform all things required by the terms hereof.

Section 3. CONDITIONS. No highway, street, alley, bridge or other public place used by Grantee shall be obstructed longer than necessary during the work of construction or repair, and shall be restored to as good order and condition as when Grantee commenced the work. All of Grantee's pipes and mains shall be so placed in the highways and other public places as not to unnecessarily interfere with the use thereof for highway purposes. Grantee will use its best efforts to not unreasonably interfere with or disrupt any public utility apparatus or facilities operated by the Township and, to the extent Grantee interferes with or disrupts any such public utility apparatus or facilities, Grantee shall restore such apparatus or facilities to as good order and condition as when Grantee commenced work.

Section 4. HOLD HARMLESS. Grantee shall at all times keep and save the Township free and harmless from all loss, costs and expense to which it may be subject by reason of the Grantee's negligent construction and negligent maintenance of the structures and equipment hereby authorized. If any action is commenced against the Township resulting from Grantee's negligent construction and maintenance, Grantee shall, upon notice, defend the Township and save it free and harmless from all loss, cost and damage arising out of such negligent construction and maintenance.

Section 5. FRANCHISE NOT EXCLUSIVE. The rights, power and authority herein granted, are not exclusive. Either manufactured or natural gas may be furnished hereunder.

Section 6. RATES. Grantee shall charge for gas furnished the rates, charges and special taxes as approved from time to time by the Michigan Public Service Commission, or its successors having authority and jurisdiction to fix and regulate gas rates and charges, or as otherwise permitted or required by applicable law or tariff, for the term of this franchise. Such rates shall be subject to Commission review and change at any time upon petition therefore being made by either said Township, acting by its Township Board, or by said Grantee.

Section 7. REVOCATION. The franchise granted by this ordinance is subject to revocation upon sixty (60) days written notice by the party desiring such revocation.

Section 8. MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION JURISDICTION. Grantee shall, as to all other conditions and elements of service not herein fixed, be and remain subject to the reasonable rules and regulations of the Michigan Public Service Commission or its successors, applicable to gas service in said Township and shall provide service in accordance with the terms and conditions set forth in its applicable tariff as approved from time to time by the Michigan Public Service Commission or its successors.

Section 9. SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS. The words "SEMCO Energy Gas Company" and "SEMCO Energy, Inc.," wherever used herein, are intended and shall be held and construed to mean and include SEMCO Energy Gas Company and its parent, subsidiaries, successors, affiliates, and assigns, whether so expressed or not. The word "Grantee," wherever used herein, is intended and shall be held and construed to mean and include SEMCO Energy Gas Company, SEMCO Energy, Inc., and the successors and assigns of each, whether so expressed or not. Grantee may assign the rights and obi igations under this agreement as long as the Grantee provides prior written notice to the Township of any such assignment.

Section 10. FORCE MAJEURE. The Grantee shall not be liable for failure to furnish service as herein provided, or for any breach of the Grantee's obligations hereunder, if such failure or breach is caused by acts of God, labor troubles, riot, or any other causes or contingencies not reasonably within the control of the Grantee.

Section 11. VACATION OR RELOCATION. The Township may require the Grantee to vacate or relocate any portion of Grantee's facilities at the Grantee's expense if such vacation or relocation is necessary to secure the public health and welfare or is otherwise required by Grantor in the exercise of a governmental function.

Section 12. COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS. Grantee shall comply with all laws, statutes, ordinances, rules and regulations regarding the installation, construction, ownership or use of its facilities, whether federal, state, or local.

Section 13. EFFECTIVE DATE. Upon adoption, the Township Clerk shall deliver to Grantee a certified copy of this ordinance. Additionally, the Township shall publish this ordinance within thirty (30) days of its adoption and this ordinance shall take effect upon the day after the date of publication thereof, continuing for a term of thirty (30) years from that date; provided, however, it shall cease and be of no effect after sixty (60) days from its adoption unless within said period the Grantee shall accept the same in writing filed with the Township Clerk.

Upon acceptance and publication hereof, the ordinance shall constitute a contract between said Township and said Grantee.

Ayes: 4
Nays: 0
Date Passed: 2-12-26

Attested, by Order of the Township of Jefferson, Cass County, Michigan

Valerie Locke
Jefferson Township Clerk

Dan Hall
Jefferson Township Supervisor

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned, being the duly qualified and acting Clerk of Jefferson Township, Cass County, Michigan, hereby certifies that: (1) the foregoing is a true and complete copy of a resolution duly adopted by the Township Board at a regular meeting held on the 12th day of February 2026, at which meeting a quorum was present and remained throughout, (2) the original thereof is on file in the records in my office, (3) the meeting was conducted, and public notice thereof was given, pursuant to and in full compliance with the Open Meetings Act (Act No. 267, Public Acts of Michigan, 1976, as amended) and, (4) minutes of such meeting were kept and will be or have been made available as required thereby.

Dated: February 12, 2026

Valerie Locke
Jefferson Township Clerk

0900 LEGALS

STATE OF MICHIGAN
43rd JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
- FAMILY DIVISION
CASS COUNTY

PUBLICATION OF NOTICE OF HEARING REGARDING PETITION FOR NAME CHANGE

CASE NO. and JUDGE
2026-051-NC
Hon. Carol M. Bealor

Court address Court telephone no.
60296 M-62,
Cassopolis, MI 49031
269-445-4454

In the matter of:
Hayden Jae Dehn

TO ALL PERSONS, including: (specify non-custodial parent's name here, if applicable) whose address is unknown and whose interest in the matter may be barred or affected by the following:
TAKE NOTICE: Hayden Jae Dehn has filed a petition for name change. A name change hearing will be held on Monday, March 30, 2026, at 8:30a.m. at Cass County Probate Court, 60296 M-62, Courtroom #20, Cassopolis, MI 49031 before Judge Carol M. Bealor to change the name of: Hayden Jae Dehn to Haidyn Jae Dehn.

0900 LEGALS

SILVER CREEK TOWNSHIP
February 11, 2026
Regular Meeting Summary
Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm and the pledge of allegiance was recited.
All Present- Braman, Honn, Behnke, Barnes, Stockwell.
Agenda, Minutes, and Bills and Claims in the amount of $62,065.33 were approved.
Updates and Reports were given.
The following Motion and Resolutions were approved:
1.Amend and increase Building Department budget by $21,000.
2.Meeting Dates Resolution
3.Supervisor Salary
4.Clerk Salary
5.Treasurer Salary
6.Trustee Salary
7.FOIA Coordinator Resolution
8.Supervisor Extra Pay & Stipend
9.Joint Approval for Extension of Agreement with SLAUA and ILS
Public Comment was offered and heard.
Meeting adjourned at 7:24pm.
Detailed minutes are available on the township website: www.silvercreektwpmi.gov

JESS HONN, CLERK

Classifieds Make a Cash Connection!

0900 LEGALS

SILVER CREEK TOWNSHIP
February 18, 2026
Special Meeting Summary

Meeting Called to Order at 3:00pm. Present: Braman, Behnke, Stockwell, Barnes.
Absent: Honn.
Motion to amend the Treasurer Salary Resolution and increase to $47,000 was Approved after a roll call vote.
Special meeting adjourned at 3:05pm.

JESS HONN, CLERK

STATE OF MICHIGAN
PROBATE COURT
CASS COUNTY

NOTICE TO CREDITORS
Decedent's Estate

CASE NO.
2026-037 DE

Estate of Robert John Sibley
Date of birth: 9/25/1975

TO ALL CREDITORS:

NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The decedent, Robert John Sibley, died 11/21/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to John K. Sibley, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 60296 M-62, Cassopolis, MI 49031 and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

Date: 3/5/2026

Attorney Name:
Michael B. Walling, P55771
4625 Beckley Road, Bldg 400
Battle Creek, MI 49015
269-968-1101

Personal Representative:
John K. Sibley
54427 M-51 North
Dowagiac, MI 49047
269-782-8788

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Have a behemoth buck, a tremendous turkey or super-sized salmon? Please submit photos to sports@TheHP.com.

Your photo must be in focus, all persons in the photo must be identified, and the general location of the hunt must be provided (for example, 10-point buck shot in Benton Township, black bear shot near Munising, Mich., etc.)

Photos by Ryan Yuenger / HP correspondent

Geometric ice formations reflect the late February sunset off the coast of Silver Beach in St. Joseph.

Take a reflective hike

An unexamined life is not worth living.

These words, allegedly spoken by Greek philosopher Socrates in 399 B.C., were some of the first to truly shape my young mind as I embarked on a wisdom quest at Grand Valley State University.

Ryan Yuenger

The phrase still subconsciously and silently steers me through life, though every so often the words bubble to the surface like pockets of knowledge escaping from the depths of my soul.

This time, I was staring into the shimmering sunset through geometric patterns in a frozen Lake Michigan when the words of Socrates returned, hurtling me back into me into my own mind – a reflection within a reflection.

The Trial

In Plato's "Apology," he writes about the trial of his mentor Socrates, who was accused of impiety against the Athenian gods, as well as corrupting the youth of Athens with his relentless Socratic method of questioning and fostering critical thinking.

During the trial, Socrates made the claim he would rather die than change his ways.

"While I have life and strength I will never stop doing philosophy," said Socrates, according to Plato. "For my aim is to persuade you all, young and old alike, not to think about your lives or your properties, but first and foremost to care about your inner self. I tell you that wealth does not make you good within, but that from inner goodness comes wealth and every other benefit to man. This is my teaching, and if it corrupts youth, then I suppose I am their corrupter. ...

"To talk daily about what makes us good, and to question myself and others, is the greatest thing man can do. For the unexamined life is not worth living."

The Reflection

Reflections are a funny thing. Sometimes we look at our reflection in the mirror and see someone else. Sometimes we look at someone else and see a reflection of ourselves.

Averting my gaze from the setting sun, a look into the river reveals another reflection – an illuminated lighthouse beacon framed perfectly by gaps in the river ice.

It was an upside-down reminder of another Socrates-inspired phrase that often scrolls across the news ticker in my brain: *The more I learn, the less I know.*

With the sun below the clouds and darkness engulfing Silver Beach, my long walk home began again – but I was even more confused than before.

Perhaps its time I brushed up the teachings of Confucius for some answers. Until then, I'll keep reflecting on my own beliefs like I'm trapped in a house of mirrors.

It's what Socrates would have wanted, I think.

Ryan Yuenger is an HP correspondent. Send him ideas of where to hike next at ryuenger@thehp.com.

A reflection of the north pier lighthouse shows through gaps in the ice on the St. Joseph River.

A man photographs the north pier lighthouse from the south pier.

Sarett Nature Center

Sarett Nature Stewards: 2-4 p.m. each Wednesday. This program is a way to experience Sarett in a whole different way. By being a nature steward you are helping Sarett but you also gain a sense of well-being. Sarett's crew will teach you many different skills such as collecting viable seeds for future planting, how to identify invasive species from native ones, removing invasive plants, and more. Ages 10+

Saps Rising! Exploring Maple Sugaring: 2-3:30 p.m. March 14. Welcome early spring with a demonstration on maple sugaring. Enjoy a talk and a stroll through the woods to learn how maple syrup is made. Learn to identify maple trees, how to tap, collect the sap and how to turn that sap into the amber syrup we love. Call 269-927-4832 to register, space is limited. Members $5, non-members $8, children $3. Maple treats will be available for sale.

Watervliet Rod & Gun Club

Hunter Education class: 6-9:30 p.m. March 12 and 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. March 14. Students must attend both days to qualify for a Hunter Education certificate. There is no charge for the course. Register online at https://michigan.storefront.kalkomey.com/em/events/10380

Email info for Get Outdoors to sports@TheHP.com, or call 429-1294 by Monday.

Outer Banks erosion reveals buried whale

By MARK PRICE
The Charlotte Observer (TNS)

Worsening beach erosion on North Carolina's Outer Banks is now being blamed for something down right creepy: Digging up a dead whale, according to coastal community leaders.

It's happening in Corolla and the Corolla Civic Association says the grave is being repeatedly uncovered and recovered at the whims of the tide.

"Approximately four years ago, a whale that washed ashore was professionally examined through a necropsy and properly buried above the high-tide line, as is standard practice. At the time, the burial location was considered safe and stable," the association wrote in a March 4 Facebook post.

"However, the ongoing loss of beach volume has now allowed erosion to uncover portions of that burial site. The result is exactly what one might expect from a four-year-old whale carcass reappearing on the beach: it stinks to high heaven. It's a strong and unpleasant reminder that the shoreline is changing."

Two humpback whales in the 28-to-38 foot range washed ashore near Corolla in 2019, and it's unclear which grave has been uncovered, according to Barbara Marzetti, president of the association's Board of Directors.

Civic leaders say the situation is "a brand-new consequence" of the erosion effecting the county's 22.6 miles of beaches. Protective dunes are vanishing and "numerous beach access stairs have been lost or damaged," the association says.

The damage has been far worse on the barrier islands to the south. Erosion has consumed entire rows of homes on Hatteras Island, with Cape Hatteras National Seashore reporting 31 beach homes destroyed since 2020.

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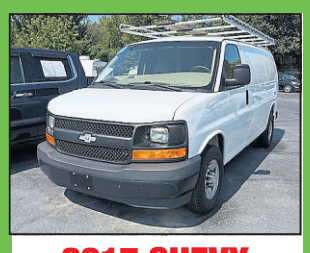

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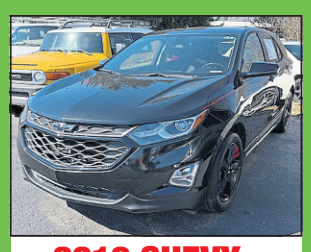

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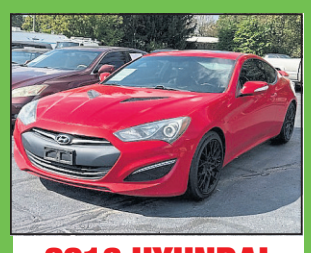

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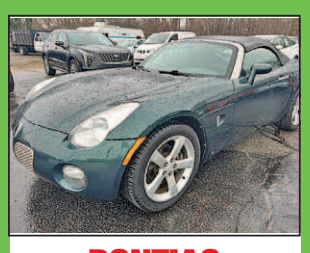

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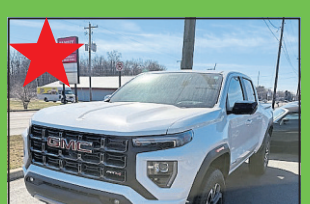

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